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No. 504.



"Ah! but this suspense is terrible. I hear a policeman in every sound; I see one in every person. Arrest stares me constantly in the face—arrest, conviction, prison. My life is a nightmare, a horror!"

"Nonsense! You ain't the sort o' a chap heroes is made on. Look at me! I've been expectin' arrest fur thirty years, an' I generally got arrested. I've been pulled in more times than any other man in New York, ez the records will show. I p'int ter that record with pride. But do I shiver an'shake when I see a cop? Not much! They're good boys, an' an honor ter the city; an' next ter bein' one o' them, is the honor o' bein' arrested by one o' them. Them's my idees, an' I p'int ter my record with pride. Brace up, old feller, an' be a man like me—me, that they call the Spider, I'm so bold an' cunnin'."

It was a miserable room of a miserable, tumble-down house on Baxter street. It was within the limits of the home of vice and crime, and one, if not two, of the criminals was there. He had plenty of congenial company in and around the building.

All through that section of our great city people live in swarms, and as all nations have poured their dregs into the area, modest Honor can scarcely lift its head among the Vice-weeds which grow rankly in the garden of waste and evil. Honest people there are, but the criminal classes have forged to the front—this is their district.

Of the two men before mentioned, both were ragged, none too clean, unshaven and unshorn, demoralized of appearance and generally "down-at-the-heel;" but while one had a red, coarse, brutal, liquor-marked face, the other was pale, delicate and not without refinement. One faced crime and its dangers boldly, caring not a whit for either as long as he kept out of prison; the other, whether a villain at heart or not, was a coward when danger was abroad as the companion of law.

The last words had barely been spoken when there was another rap; this time unmistakably at their door; and the timid man sprung to his feet and retreated to an adjoining room.

He who remained raised his voice bluffly:

"Come in!"

And the door opened and two young men entered. They looked out of place in that miserable room, for they were well—even fashionably dressed, and had an aristocratic air which savored of Murray Hill. Appearances, however, are not always reliable.

"Hullo, your Honor!" quoth the vagabond at the table, addressing the latter of the visitors. "Got around ag'in, ain't ye?"

"I said I would come."

"Certain—certain! Now I see ye are a man o' yer word."

"Every time, Jack. Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Stafford. Alfred, this is Mr. Jack Jeffrey, the Spider."

Mr. Jeffrey arose and shook Stafford's hand effusively. The latter plainly shrunk from the contact, but he tried to bear himself boldly and conceal his aversion. Just then Mr. Jeffrey felt no class prejudice, and his grasp was hearty and his voice loud and cheerful.

The three men sat down, and Jeffrey interspersed his hearty remarks with sly glances at the watches and jewelry of the visitors. He was wearing a mask, and only wished that he dared to capture the valuables so near, and yet so far beyond his reach.

"Let's come right to business," said the tall visitor, whose name proved to be Grimes. "You and I beat around the bush before, Jeffrey; we need not do so now."

"Not a bit 'on't," Jeffrey agreed.

"In a word, my friend, Stafford, is the man who wants information about the girl."

"Friend o' yours, pard?" asked Jeffrey, looking blandly at Stafford.

The latter started, flashed, and awkwardly replied:

"I prefer not to state—"

"He's interested," explained Grimes, glibly, as he trod on Stafford's toes warily. "Moreover, Jack, he is the man with the money."

"I like boodle," said Jeffrey, his eyes glittering. "In this respeck I p'int with pride ter my record. I like boodle, but I'll be hanged if I git much on't."

"Well, you have a chance now, if you come to business. Mr. Stafford wants to know about the girl."

"Minola Day?"

"Of course."

"She's a charmin' creetur, ain't she, Mister Stafford?"

"See here, Jack, this is nonsense," Grimes

sharply exclaimed. "You are fishing to learn why we want the girl. I tell you plumply we are not telling. I have offered you a good sum to reveal where she is. The question is, will you tell and get your money?"

"Strange that sech bloods ez you should be interested in a Baxter-street kid."

Jack Jeffrey still evaded the point, but he had an object. He saw that every inquisitive word he spoke, and every glance he directed, was worrying Alfred Stafford. The latter was not at ease. He moved nervously about, and seemed to wish himself well away, furnishing a strong contrast to cool Mr. Grimes.

Their ragged host knew that he was on the track of some mystery, and was anxious to solve it. But Grimes was capable of dealing with him. Bringing his hand forcibly down on the table, that person angrily exclaimed:

"Jeffrey, we've had enough of this. In one word, will you speak out? I won't dally with you longer. Will you speak, or shall I go away?"

"Ef I've been holdin' off, it's 'cause I am in a quandam," the Spider explained.

"A what? Oh! I see—a quandary. How so?"

"The palatial residence that knew Minola Day don't know her no longer. She's moved."

"Removed?"

"Jes' so."

"Where has she gone?"

"That's the question. Whar? She's left her bed an' board, an' taken her leave. Hold on, gents. Don't git flurried. I'm sure she's still within hailin' distance o' the Five P'ints, an' ef you'll allow me, I'll find her ag'in. I am a regular ferret fur findin' folks—in them respex, I p'int ter my record with pride."

"In a word, the girl has left her former residence, and you don't know where she is?"

"Jes' so, but I kin, an' will find her."

Grimes looked inquiringly at Stafford. Both looked a good deal disappointed, this being especially the case with the latter. Grimes, the active member of the pair, seemed at a loss what to do next.

Jeffrey put in another recommendation for himself as a "ferret," and Grimes, after some meditation, slowly asked:

"How long will it take you to find her?"

"Mebbe one day; mebbe two, or more."

"What do you say, Alfred?"

"I say, let the man find her, and you and I go up-town," was the quick reply.

"He don't like Baxter street," observed Jeffrey, "an', I'll allow, it ain't over-healthy fur some."

"Well, Jack, we leave the case in your hands, but let me whisper a word in your ear. You must be prompt and faithful. I am too old a bird to be fooled with—hold on! hear me through!—and you had better make a note of it. If you try any tricks you'll get left, and never handle a cent of the boodle you crave."

Jeffrey hastened to defend himself. He was an honest, faithful man; he would not play a trick on them if he could, and he knew by their looks that he could not; and he would soon find Minola Day and give them full information.

"That's all right," said Grimes, as he rose. "Act as you talk, and we shall be good friends. Here's a quarter to get you some beer."

He tossed a coin to the Baxter street man, and then went out with Stafford. He paused on the sidewalk, but his companion exclaimed:

"Come: let us get away. This vile place is too much for my nerves."

"Fastidious as ever and nervous as a woman. This won't do. Brace up, my boy! Remember that we have got to find this Minola Day, or you will be liable to live in Baxter street yourself in your old age, as poverty-stricken as those now here."

"You are right. I'll try to keep this in mind," replied Stafford, with a temporary show of spirit. "We must get that miserable girl out of the way—it would be a terrible thing to have my prospects spoiled by such a beggar brat. She must be gotten out of the way."

"I have a new idea. You remember the boy I have engaged to go into old Richmore's house?"

"Yes."

"It strikes me he is just the fellow to apply to for information. Wish I'd thought of it before. He's a native of this region, and probably knows everybody. We will call on him, and see if he knows Minola Day."

"Where does she live?"

"In the street, he says—the Prince of the Pavement, he calls himself. I think he may be found in, or near, Paradise Park. That's his favorite stamping-ground, which is the source of his pet name—Five Points Phil. He's a

queer, sharp young rascal, and it's time you met him, as he is to be our ally in the great game for your precious relative's money-bags. Come on!"

And they started for the Five Points.

In the mean while the man who had run away at their approach had rejoined Jack Jeffrey.

"They're gone, aren't they?" he asked.

"Certain. You heerd the talk, did ye?" the Spider asked

"Yes!"

"Wal, now, Abe Adkins, I've got a purty high regard fur you, or you never would 'a' heerd it. Private business is p. b., ye know. O' course you won't give me away."

"Certainly not, Mr. Jeffrey. But what of this girl they want? Who is she?"

"One o' the Five P'ints belles; a girl o' seven or twelve, or sech a matter."

"Poor?"

"Poor ez a February muskeeter."

"Where are her parents?"

"Dead, absent, or otherwise missin'. I don't know."

"Poor child!"

Adkins heaved a deep sigh; then, after a pause, he added:

"What do those young men want with her? Well-dressed, rich young men should have no interest in the miserable victims of poverty. What do they want of this child?"

"Want her fur work in the country, or suthin' o' that sort. Don't be too inquisitive, Abe. Direct all yer massive brain-power ter yer own affairs. That's what I've allays tried ter do, an' I p'int with pride ter my record."

"Heaven knows, I have enough to think of."

The words were mournfully said, and the man, sitting at the table and biting his fingers unconsciously, looked wretched enough to move almost any one to pity. But Jack Jeffrey was unmoved. He saw Adkins start at every sound outside the room, but this awakened only contemptuous pity. He despised Adkins.

"Do you think I shall be arrested, Jeffrey?" he continued, after a pause.

"Rested? Great Scott! no. Don't git onto yer antics ag'in. The p'lice ain't omniperent, an' a man kin hide in Baxter street until all the dogs o' war grow old an' lose their teeth. Thousands does it. Jest you brace up, Abe, an' hev some grit. Sample arter me. I've allays argued that grit is better than gold. I've tried both in my time. Don't you be afeerd o' ther confounded coppers!"

CHAPTER II.

THE IMP OF PARADISE PARK.

"THERE he is, just as I expected!"

The speaker was Luke Grimes. He stood with Alfred Stafford at the corner of Baxter and Worth streets, and pointed across the way. Alfred looked, but failed to understand.

"Whom do you mean?"

"The under-sized boy leaning against the building. He looks to be fourteen, but claims to be two years older than that. That is Five Points Phil."

Stafford looked more attentively. The boy was small of stature, but he had a compact, wiry, hardy organization, and his small face was as sharp as that of a weasel. He was ragged—wonderfully ragged—and none too clean, and, at first sight, one would have said he was exactly like the rest of the lowest class around the Five Points.

Closer inspection, however, would show a somewhat peculiar face. Intelligence was there; and in the twinkling eyes, and about the curiously contracted mouth, was that which indicated a degree of humor.

Those who looked at Five Points Phil any length of time wanted to talk with him; to listen to such an odd-looking boy. And when they were through they would have just such an opinion of him as he saw fit to give them. Having the natural gifts of an actor, he could assume the ways of a "Bowery tough," or pose as a Sunday-school boy in bad luck and bad clothes.

Grimes and Stafford approached.

"Good-morning, my young friend," said the former.

Without removing his hands from his pockets, or shifting his position in the least, the boy placidly replied:

"Mornin', my young frien'."

"I see you are at your old post."

"I never neglect duty, and you know Paradise Park is under my charge."

"Exactly. Well, this is my friend, who wants to hire you."

"I am on hire, at present. Stranger, owin' to

a peculiar combine o' adversary circumstances, I was not borned with a silver spoon in my mouth. My arncestors meant well, but they neglected this very 'portant matter. Mebbe spoons was kept locked up that year, so they couldn't raise arny; sartain it is, there was no spoon in my mouth. I got a bard start from my arncestors, arnd I've kept it up ever sence. Them is the chronometer fax in my hist'ry."

Five Points Phil made this explanation looking full at Stafford, and he had an attentive listener. In fact, the boy looked as peculiar as he spoke, and was so unlike other boys, that he exercised an almost weird influence over Stafford.

"And you are to be hired?" the latter mechanically said.

"Owin' to the peculiar arnd ardverse state o' my finarnces, I be."

"Mr. Grimes has made the bargain, I believe?"

"I arnd him have," amended Phil.

"Exactly," put in Grimes. "And you will be ready for work to-morrow, will you?"

"If there ain't no upheaval, I shall."

"All right. Now, I have one more question to ask you, if you please. You are well acquainted around the Five Points, aren't you?"

"I know how ev'ry pavin'-stone looks on both sides."

"Exactly. Now, do you know a girl named Minola Day?"

Phil closed one eye, and looked speculatively with the other at the platform in the middle of Paradise Park.

"A girl named Minola Gray?"

"Day—Minola Day."

"Just so. A girl named Minola Day. What fur a looker is she?"

"A girl of twelve, or such a matter, tall, slender and very refined; with dark-brown hair and hazel eyes. She has lived somewhere around here, and is as poor as a church mouse."

"The larter fax is indefinite; I never seen a church mouse. However, there is plenty o' poor girls around the Five Points. The woods—I mean the houses—is fool o' them. Named Minola Day?"

"Yes."

"Don't know her. There is Myra Gray, arnd—"

"She is not the one. I am sorry you don't know the Day girl."

"Would you consider her a desirable party fur me to know?"

"Yes, if you want to make a dollar."

"I would ardd a thousand girls to my 'quaintance if I could git a dollar a head fur them. What if I should swing myself around arnd find Minola Day?"

The boy looked full at Grimes now, and the latter believed he could see a spark of cupidity in those twinkling eyes.

"By so doing you can earn the dollar."

"Arnd git it?"

"Of course."

"Then I sharll start out to-morrer with a blarnk book arnd a pencil, arnd carnass the whole o' the Sixth Ward. If she's inter it, I sharll develop the fax arnd the dollar. Assooreddy!"

"Good for you. Now I shall have hopes, for I can see that you are as sharp as a needle."

"I'm bad when set down on, but ginerally mild arnd harmless. Named Minola Day. Assooreddy! Been huntin' for her long?"

"Only a day or two."

"Might 'a' knowned you strangers couldn't find her."

"We had an agent."

"Oh! 'Twarn't Tim Feeley?"

"No."

"Who?"

"On the whole, I think I will not say; I don't want to prejudice you. Now, I want you to go to your place of employment to-morrow, so you'll have to look for the girl to-day."

"Assooreddy! I will. Named Minola Day, eh?"

"Yes."

"How did you lose track o' her?"

"Now don't be too inquisitive;" and Grimes's manner was somewhat sharp. "Just you find her, and ask no questions. I trust you are not too scrupulous."

"Scroopless," replied Phil, "is like b'ile. They ain't nec'sary, arnd they be exasp'rating. I ain't got b'iles, arnd I ain't got scroopless."

Here his thin face assumed an expression which made him look so "tough" that Grimes was delighted, and no more was said about scruples. Definite arrangements were made, and then the young men walked away, passing along Worth street toward Broadway.

"What do you think of him?" Grimes asked.

"He is very odd; the only one of his kind, I should say."

"But he's a hard citizen."

"Beyond question."

"And will be just the lad we want when we do our crooked work with old Richmore."

"Hush! not so loud. Walls have ears."

Stafford looked around nervously, but Grimes only laughed. They took a Broadway car and started up-town.

In the mean while Five Points Phil had motioned to a boy of about his own age, who had been watching at a distance, to approach, and the other boy in rags obeyed.

"Patsey," said Phil, "low me to interrogate you."

"Blaze away!" was the ready reply.

"Is Minola Day stayin' at the House o' Industry now?"

"Yes."

"Be you sure?"

"I am, dat. I seen her only yesterday, an' she looked like she was livin' on plums an' peaches."

"Reckless in her ef she is; don't approve o' such articles o' food. Plums arnd peaches is too yeasty fur a reg'lar thing. Assooreddy! Patsey, what do you know about Minola? Wha's her arncestors, her frien's, her 'quaintances, et setuary?"

"She ain't got no ancestors, an' not many friends. She used ter live wid de Bassettts, but dhey moved to Chicago, an' she's widout ary friend."

"I was cognizance o' what you hev told, but was in hopes you was more up in her family hist'ry. Say, it's sorter odd."

"W'at is?"

"You seen them two bloods?"

"Yis."

"They warnt to find her."

"Dhey do?"

"Assooreddy."

"What fur?"

"Now, Patsey, you put a moomentous question. What fur? Tell me that, arnd I'll tell you wha smote Billy Paterson. Patsey, I smell smoke. Them fellers are fungus chaps—genteele cut-throats: arnd they ain't up ter no good. Assooreddy not. They interrogated me, did I know whar Minola was? arnd when I said I didn't, they offered me Gov'ment bonds ter find her. Patsey, tha's summat wrong; them crooks don't mean Minola arny good."

"Why didn't yez tell dem ter go to de Ould Nick?"

"My respexted contemporary, I am surprised at your want o' instinct! Guess you ain't in the habit o' dealin' with fungus chaps."

"I see enough fungus chaps."

"Assooreddy, but how do you meet 'em? Do you give cunnin' fur cunnin'? No! Patsey, afore you kin take the fifty-first degree in our lodge, you must learn ter be a artom sharper. Now, I'd see them funguses in Halifax afore I'd help 'em ter find Minola, but be I goin' ter say so, plain an' blunt? Assooreddy, not. No; I looked across Paradise Park to the House o' Industry, whar I was morally sure Minola was, an' told 'em I would find her. Why? Because I'm goin' ter worm inter their arfections, find out the whole game, arnd then beat 'em out in the end. See?"

"You ought ter be a detective, Phil!" said Patsey, admiringly.

"Wharfore? At present I'm the Prince o' the Pavement, and guardeen o' Paradise Park. Would you have me climb down from my lofty eminence, and be a common detective. Assooreddy, not!"

"Of course not, Phil. But why do they want ter foind Minola?"

"That's a moomentous question. Patsey, I smell smoke; that venerated young lady is in danger."

"Begorra, I'll punch dhe head of dhem ef dhey don't let her alone!" said Patsey, belligerently.

"Hold on!—hold on! Here comes one o' the finest. Be joodiciously mum."

A policeman approached.

"See here, boys, I've seen you around Paradise Park a good deal," he observed.

"Thar has been a hundred and ten pounds o' me around here 'casionaly," quoth Five Points Phil.

"Do you know a man named Abe Adkins?"

"Assooreddy. Seen him often."

"Lately?"

"No; can't say I hev."

"If you happen to do so, just let me know, will you?"

"Yes. Whare sharll I find you, when you are on dooty?"

"You imp, you don't you insinuate that I leave my post!" and the officer made a good-natured pass at Phil with his club.

"I never insinooate," Phil placidly replied.

"Insinooations is pecooliarly orbnoxious."

"Well, about Adkins. He's wanted, Adkins is; and you and I can do a handsome thing by catching him."

"What's his joodicial crime?"

"Never mind; just you let me know if you see the man, and I will see you well rewarded." and the policeman walked away.

"More myst'ry!" quoth Phil. "The air o' the Five Points reeks with it, ez perspiration stews outer the pores. I reckon the vicinity is pecooliarly adarpted to sech things, arnd that Paradise Park is a focus which irrad'ates gleams and quivers o' crime arnd mystery. A marn may smile arnd be a villain still—or a noisy villain, likewise. Assooreddy!"

"Phil," said Patsey, who had been waiting for a chance to speak, "we kin earn dhat money roight away. I know where Abe Adkins is this blissed minute!"

CHAPTER III.

THE SPIDER BECOMES UGLY.

FIVE POINTS PHIL heard this assertion without a change of countenance.

"You do, hey?"

"Yis. He's over at Jack Jeffrey's. I seen him dere. I thought at de toime he was hidin' from de coppers, but I said nivir a worrud. Be jabers! here's a chance fur us to make some money, Phil. I wouldn't let on dhat I knewed where he was until you said de worrud, but it's jest as I says, an' we can get him pulled in an collar de boode."

Patsey was excited, but the Prince of the Pavement remained as calm as ever. It took a good deal to ruffle his composure.

"Now hol' on right thar, my b'loved frien'," he replied. "Let us voo the matter joodiciously. I ain't goin' ter blow on Abe Adkins, nor any other marn, until I know what's inter the game. Law, Partsey, is a coorious sort o' a critter, arnyhow. Never bet for, or ag'in', the law, till you know the fax. If you find that fax, law arnd jestice don't hitch hosses, it will be to your pecooliar temp'rarl arnd sperituous welfare ter be as blind as a marble statoo. Law like common marn, may smile arnd be a villain still. Assooreddy!"

Having delivered this logical essay, Phil suddenly ceased to lean against the building, stood erect, crooked one finger toward Patsey, and added:

"Come with me!"

The boys crossed to the opposite side of the square, passing the House of Industry, upon which Phil bestowed a keen glance, and were continuing their way, when they were accosted by a woman who had just come down Worth street, from the direction of Broadway.

"Young men," said she, "do you live around here?"

Phil looked at her critically. She was a person of at least forty-five years, respectably, but plainly dressed, and bore an extremely timid look.

"Yis'm," the Pavement Prince replied, "I do reside 'round here. These same is my ancestral halls, though millionaires arnd aldermen wouldn't conside it much o' a haul. Assooreddy, not!"

"Are you well acquainted here?"

"Noomerously."

"Perhaps you know a man named Jack Jeffrey?"

"I do, mum."

"Can you tell me where he lives? I have business there, and would like to engage you as a guide."

The little woman had been surveying Phil critically in return, and she was evidently encouraged. Her manner became less nervous, and the idea had entered her mind that, if she could secure his company, she would be safer in what she considered the worst and most wicked place in the world.

"You hev brought yer application ter the right market, mum. I am pecooliarly fitted ter be yer guide, fur thar is not a pavin'-stone in this untrodden wilderness but I know both sides on. Yes; I'm a guide o' the first water; my aunt Hepsibah was half-brother—I mean, sister—ter Daniel Boone and Tecumseh. Assooreddy!"

This remarkable statement passed unnoticed by the woman.

"I will give you fifty cents—which is all the money I can spare—if you will conduct me to Jeffrey's and then remain through our interview. I am somewhat afraid, and want company."

Five Points Phil. the Pavement Prince.

"Your idees are right, mum, fur thar is men 'round here who kin smile arnd be a villain still. I hate ter confess it, fur my heart is bound up in the Sixth Ward, but fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things. Assooreddy! Patsey, we'll excuse you. Come on, mum; come on. We will beard the catawamptious lion in his den."

The little woman continued to grow courageous. Phil's manner, if not his words, told her that he was honest, and that was what she desired above all things.

She followed him without hesitation, but, as they went, explained that she wished him to enter the house with her and have it understood, not that he was a guide just engaged, but that he had come all the way with her, and was interested in the case.

Phil readily agreed to this, and it would be the more easy because he did not believe Jeffrey knew him. Jack was a man who generally spent the hours of day in his own quarters, and then went out at night to ply his trade—which was to get his living any way he could.

In other words, he was a confirmed law-breaker.

Phil felt a good deal of curiosity to know what business the meek little woman—who had given the name of Mrs. Alden—could have with Jeffrey, but he asked no questions.

When the house was reached she surveyed it with evident uneasiness, but, with an effort, regained her calmness, and made no comments. In a measure she had been prepared for the low, sinister character of the place.

Phil pulled the dilapidated old bell. A slovenly girl promptly answered the ring.

"We desire for ter see Mr. J. Jeffrey," explained Phil.

The girl looked at them both sharply, but they did not have an ominous appearance. A ragged boy and a timid woman could not work much harm. So she made room for them to enter.

"Second floor, rear," she tersely said.

They ascended the stairs, which creaked dismally under their feet. Dilapidation was everywhere. Wall-paper, put on years before, hung in banners where it remained at all; broad cracks showed, here and there, in walls and floor; dirt was omnipresent; and the odor was as strong, if not as pleasant, as that of Jockey Club.

Second floor, rear—they rapped at the door. There was a sound of hurried movements, a pause, and then a bluff voice bade them enter.

They obeyed.

Jack Jeffrey was seated at the table, as usual, and his pipe had been in such full blast that the room was blue with shifting smoke. He removed his pipe then, however, and sat staring at the visitors blankly. It required a good deal to surprise him, but, plainly as Mrs. Alden was dressed, it was so evident that she was not one of his sphere in life that he was momentarily dazed.

Then he abruptly arose.

"Is this Mr. Jeffrey?" she asked.

"It is, me lady; it is. I'm honist Jack Jeffrey, a poor but worthy man. Ax my neighbors, me lady; they'll tell ye I p'int with pride ter my record."

Five Points Phil muttered something about men who smile, but hung discreetly in the rear.

"I have come on business," added Mrs. Alden.

"Happy ter hear it."

Mr. Jeffrey smoothed down his ragged vest, and tried to look like a solid citizen.

"I trust that you will answer a few questions," she continued.

Mr. Jeffrey metaphorically pricked up his ears. He did not like the last words. Above all things he hated to answer questions, for subjects upon which he was qualified to answer were, also, subjects kept shady in Baxter street.

"Why, cert'ly," he confusedly answered.

"Very well. Do you know a man named Adkins?"

The fog of smoke did not wholly hide the frown which appeared on the Spider's face.

"Never heerd on him!" he declared.

"Excuse me if I deny what you say. Don't be afraid to speak out. I am Mr. Adkins's friend, and yours, also. I know that he is an old associate of yours—"

"He was, me lady," said Mr. Jeffrey, simulating great candor, "but owin' ter a misfortunate accident, he has departed this life. He died o' rheumatism o' the brain, brought on by eatin' too much macaroni."

"Nonsense! He is not dead, and I believe he is with you this moment."

The little woman spoke with unusual firmness, and Jeffrey put up both hands deprecatingly, but she continued:

"Now don't be afraid. If Mr. Adkins has a friend in the world, it is I. He is unfortunate,

and others have forsaken him, but while I live I shall love him."

Her voice grew tremulous, and she ended with a sob. Hurried footsteps sounded behind her. She turned quickly. Abe Adkins was there, his hands extended. She gave a little cry, and in a moment more was folded in his arms.

"My faithful sister!" murmured the hunted man brokenly.

Jeffrey uttered a groan and sat down. He looked like one who had met with some great affliction, and seemed overwhelmed by the situation.

"You don't look wal, my frien'," observed Five Points Phil gravely.

"I ain't wal!" groaned Jeffrey.

"Rhoomatiz o' the brain, mebbe," suggested Phil.

"No insolence, you young scamp."

"My b'loved contemporary you wrong me. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn things. I'm about twelve pints ter the quart. Assooreddy!"

"Who be you, anyhow?" the Spider inquired.

"John L. Ryan is my cognomen."

Jeffrey was growing suspicious and angry under this banter, but Adkins suddenly advanced to their host.

"Jack, I'm in luck," he said. "This is my sister."

"Thought you was an orphan," confusedly replied Jeffrey.

"She is the one—the only one—of my friends who has remained true to me in prosperity and adversity alike."

"Yes," Mrs. Alden added, "and I am going to give practical proof of it. Robert, I have arranged a place for you where you will be safe, and—far more comfortable than here. I am going to take you home with me."

Jeffrey's bristly hair seemed to stand more erect than usual, and his face grew darker—even more menacing.

"I'm afraid it isn't safe," said Adkins, doubtfully.

"Oh! yes; I have arranged all carefully."

"But your reputation? I am branded as a criminal—"

"You are my brother!"

The little woman seemed to grow beautiful and eloquent. She was faithful to her unfortunate relative, and the mantle of sisterly affection is nobler than robes of silk.

But Five Points Phil, watching Jeffrey, saw that that person objected strongly. Whatever his motives, he did not like the outlook in any degree. His bluff good humor had all gone, and the Pavement Prince could not help thinking that he was just the person to commit dark deeds and have no mercy.

"Abe, don't you think on't!" exclaimed Jeffrey.

"Why not?" demanded Mrs. Alden.

"Because he's safe hyar, an' nowhar else. I've taken him in like a—like a—"

"Brand yanked outer the burnin'," suggested Phil.

"Like a good Samerican," went on Jeffrey. "Abe, thar's no place so safe as this. This is an asylum fur the unfort'nit; a refuge fur the poor, helpless, an' maimed o' ev'ry nation; a monument o' charity an'—an'—"

"Dirt, yarler fever, typhoid arnd rats," put in the helpful imp of Paradise Park.

"Silence, you young ruffian; ef you was my boy I'd wallop ye fur breakin' in when yer elders was speakin'. Abe, 'tain't safe fur ye ter leave here."

"But I tell you I have a safe place for him," said Mrs. Alden.

"And my heart longs for my relatives," added Adkins.

"Stifle it! Relatives is nuisances. I was born without 'em, an' I am thankful for it. Abe, I've done a good 'eal fur you—don't desert me now. Let me continer ter care fur you, so I can—"

"P'int with pride ter yer record," suggested Phil.

"You young ruffian, speak ag'in, an' I'll brain ye!" howled Jeffrey.

"I'm mum; assooreddy!"

"Thank you, Jack," said Adkins, "but I think I will not trespass longer on your hospitality. I will go with my sister."

"Not by a long shot. I'll be eternally hung ef ye do!" cried Jack, striking his fist violently on the table.

Adkins looked at the speaker in surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Just what I say. I know ez wal ez you that there is a l - le back o' all this. I've taken care o' you, an' run the resk o' havin' the p'lice down on me, an' now that you hev another friend show up, you purpose ter shake Jack

Jeffrey, do ye? Wal, it can't be did. Mark that down!"

"Why, Jack, you have no cause to be offended, and I assure you I high'y value your aid and friendship—"

"Fine words is cheap. I want boodle."

"Boodle!"

"Yes."

"If I can ever pay you I will—nay, you shall be paid, if I work my fingers off—but I am now poor."

"Thar's a boodle back on ye," the Spider persisted.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! I'm fly, I be. Don't yer think I am an old, blind, spavined mule, fur I ain't. When sharp men is wanted I'm around—I p'nter my record with pride."

At this moment a rap sounded at the door.

"Come in!" shouted Jeffrey.

The door promptly opened, and two big, ragged, evil-looking wretches walked in. Five Points Phil started a little as he saw them; he knew them to be two of the worst characters to be found anywhere around. Durg Dumby and Black Sam, they were called—the latter being a mulatto.

"Now," added Jeffrey, "hyar is two o' my friends ter see jecture done, an' we'll hev jecture ef we fight fur it. Now then, Mister Adkins, be you goin' ter leave here?"

CHAPTER IV.

HELD PRISONERS.

ONLY Adkins seemed at a loss to fully understand the speaker. He had known Jeffrey for some time, and, though well aware that the man was not exactly a model citizen, he had believed him devoted to his interests. This sudden falling away of the mask surprised and perplexed him.

Mrs. Alden looked pale and startled.

Five Points Phil saw clearer than either of the others. He knew the Spider and his way, and was not at all surprised at the turn affairs had taken. He was not, however, at all satisfied.

"While you're argoin' the p'int," he observed, "I guess I'll jest step 'round the corner arnd see a marn."

"I guess you won't!" Jeffrey retorted.

"No?"

"No, sir. You, an' all the rest, is hyar ter stay. Ez I said ter Abe, I ain't ter be cheated out o' the boodle. He don't sneak off an' shake me; he stays here. Now, you would like ter sneak out an' call a cop, wouldn't ye?"

"The drift o' the argooment ain't toward cops, my amiable frien'. I spoke o' goin' out. Do I understand that you refoose ter let me go?"

"I do."

"Whar'fore?"

The Pavement Prince drew himself up with great dignity, and looked the Spider full in the face as he spoke.

"Because I won't let you call a cop."

"Who wants ter call one?"

"You do."

"Perhaps you know my mind better'n I do."

"I know it well enough."

"Wal, I object ter bein' bottled up hyar like a deceased lobster, I do!" Phil asserted.

"Object, an' be hanged! You see Black Sam an' Durg Dumby behind yer! Wal, you can't pass them. The three ov ye is prisoners, an' hyar ye stay."

Phil crooked his forefinger, shook it at the Spider, shook his head arnd solemnly said:

"J. Jeffrey, I'm afeerd you're a bad egg. A marn may smile, arnd be a villain still. It's a pecooliar state o' sarcumstances when a full-blooded white citizen o' the Sixth Ward is bottled up thusly. Assooreddy! Great ginger! them ez named you 'Spider,' named you wal."

"You're in my web, anyhow."

"Darn yer pestiferous ole web! You can't keep me in it."

"We'll see."

"Then you really assert, arnd asseverate, that that thar door is closed ter keep me in?"

"Yes; an' ef you try ter go out Black Sam will slug ye."

"Ef Samivel triesit he may git slugged hisself, arnd when I let myself loose I'm a surgin' cyclone. But I don't want no row—assooreddy not—arnd ez long ez you arsk me so pretty, why I'll sart'ly set down arnd enjoy yer delicate s'ciety. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

And Five Points Phil took a chair by the table, elevated his feet to the latter article of furniture, thrust his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest, and leaned back with an air as

serenely as though he was especially pleased with the situation.

By this time Adkins had recovered in a measure from his surprise.

"Do I understand, Jack," he asked, "that you turn against me?"

"Call it what yer will," the Spider answered, "I ain't goin' ter let ye sneak off. D'y'e s'pose I've been takin' care o' you all this while out o' charity? Bah! I ain't no sech soft-head ez that. I knowed thar was a boodle back on ye, an' that is why I've tooken care on ye. An' I ain't goin' ter hev you give me the slip. Money is what I'm after, an' don't ye forget it."

"But you are wrong about there being money back of me. I am a beggar, and likely to remain so—"

"Oh! come off! Don't try ter fool me."

"I assure you it is true."

"Then you're a liar."

Adkins flushed, but he knew the value of keeping cool. Jeffrey had shown his true colors, and with Durg Dumby and Black Sam back of him, he could do as he saw fit. And no deed was so lawless that they would shrink from it.

"I am sorry, Jack—"

"Come down ter hard-pan. Don't waste fine words on me, fur I ain't no Mary's-little-lamb."

"Assooreddy, not!" observed Five Points Phil.

"Things has come ter sech a pass," continued Jeffrey, "that I must put down my foot. You an' this woman, whom yer call yer sister, are tryin' ter cheat me. I ain't ter be cheated. Them as have tried me have found me oncommon fly, an' I p'int ter my record with pride. Now, all three on you hev got ter stay right here—*pris'ners*; d'y'e hear?"

"This is infamous!" Adkins exclaimed.

"Or, metbe, you'd like ter have me go ter the plice station, an' tell 'em who knocked over the cop, t'other night."

"I did it in self-defense," protested Adkins, breathing like a man after a long run.

"Oh! did the cop hit you?"

"No; but he was going to arrest me."

"Ha! ha! How childlike and bland! Self-defense! I imagine ye at the Tombs, sayin': 'I plead not guilty. I did it in self-defense. The blue-coat was goin' ter arrest me fur an old crime I did, an' I very properly knocked him over. My plea is self-defense.' Oh! Abe, you caller-headed idiot, wouldn't that be rich?"

The Spider went into a paroxysm of mirth, while Five Points Phil crooked his finger, shook it at the fellow, and gravely observed:

"A marn may smile, arnd be a villain still!"

Suddenly Jeffrey's mood changed.

"Enough o' this. "We'll corral ye up now. Durg an' Sam, give me yer help. We'll drive our cattle ter pen."

And this plan was duly executed, each one of the prisoners being given a separate room. Jack saw to Phil, himself, whom he easily recognized as the most dangerous of the trio.

"You're a sharp-lockin' knave," he observed, "but I warn ye not ter play any tricks on me. My men are on the watch all the time—eleven n 'em—an' ef you try ter escape, you'll git shot dead ez a herring."

"That ain't very definite, my b'loved contemporary. You'd better leave figgers o' speech, arnd stick ter fax. Fax is stubborn things. One thing more—I only submit ter corporeal uncarceration under protest. I'm liable ter git out a *habeus corpus* writ, arnd hev my case removed ter a higher court, or—"

"Oh! shut up; I'm goin' now."

"The best o' frien's must part, arnd this reminds me ter say I may not be here when you call ag'in. I may slip out. I'm a slippery chapp, ez everybody knows—I p'int with pride ter my record."

"Slip out, eh? Do you see the bars on them winders?"

"Assooreddy."

"Then how'll you git out?"

"You've forgot ter close one aveny o' escape."

"What one?"

"The key-hole!"

Jeffrey uttered an angry exclamation, turned and went out, banging the door behind him. As he locked it, Phil called out audibly:

"Say ter the boys that, though I ain't got no keerds, I'm at home ter all callers. Office hours, six ter thirteen."

Jeffrey paid no attention to this, but went to his room, where he found Dumby and Black Sam. He gave these men particular directions. He did not believe it possible for the prisoners to escape, but he cautioned his followers to be on the alert, and ready to foil any possible move in

this direction—above all, to keep an eye on the boy.

"I don't know that young hound," he observed, "but I kin see he's a keener. Look out fur him!"

His fellow ruffians promised, and then Jack put on his hat and went out. He was soon inside a miserable old house on Elm street, and in conversation with a red-haired man who was named Sim Black.

Jack came to business promptly.

"Sim, is that girl, Minola Day, still in the House o' Industry?"

"I s'pose so," Black answered.

"Kin you git her out?"

"Kin I? Why should I? Do you wanter support her financially?"

"Yes."

"Hello! Hev you budded out ez a charity dispenser?"

"I hev; but don't you git the idee that it's fur the girl. I ain't no soft-head; I p'int ter my record with pride. What I want is ter feed my own pocket-book."

"Whew! Is thar a boodle behind the gal?"

"Rather!"

"Why in blazes didn't yer say so afore?"

"I wasn't aawer that she was wanted, but I'm onter the racket now. Say, what chance is thar fur you ter git the gal out? Their rules is strict, ain't they?"

"Yes, but she can be got out. Ye see, when her other frien's died, I sorter felt bad fur the gal—not a womanly weakness, ye see, but on genial principles."

"I see."

"So," pursued Black, feeling his character vindicated, "I thought I'd git her in the House o' Industry. I tol' 'em I was her natural protector, bein' her mother's cousin; an' ez I was desp'rit poor, I wanted 'em to take her. It was a go, an' thar she is, now. But I kin take her out ag'in, bein' her nearest relative—in imagination. D'y'e see?"

"Yes. But the girl may have given you away, an' told 'em you ain't a relative."

"I cautioned her not ter, an' tol' her she might starve if she did. See?"

"An' you think you kin take her out?"

"I'm sure on't. All I've got ter do is ter convince 'em I'm-able ter take care o' her myself, an' I'll say I've had a boodle o' decent size left ter me."

"The gal may hev become attached ter the House o' Industry, an' refuse ter leave."

"Minola is too gentle fur that, an' she sorter likes me."

"Wal, Sim, I'll give ye twenty-five dollars ter git her out, an' deliver her inter my hands."

"Done!"

Black spoke emphatically. That sum of money would have hired him to do any villainous deed, and he had no scruples against plotting to harm a helpless child.

CHAPTER V.

A CAGED BIRD AND AN EMPTY CAGE.

JEFFREY remained half an hour longer with Black, and then left the house. He did not at once return home, for he had other business on hand—business which occupied his time until, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, we find him seated in the room of a house on Mulberry street.

It was not more respectable than his usual resorts, and the single window had been newly boarded up on the inside. It looked very much like a prison.

A ring of the door-bell caused Jack to spring to his feet and hasten down-stairs, where he managed to gain the room called a parlor before the outer door was opened. When he saw the new-comers, his brutal face was radiant with triumph.

They were Sim Black, and a girl who looked to be twelve years old.

She was a tall, slender child, with light-brown hair, large, gray eyes, and a remarkably pretty, sweet, refined face. But there was more than this in her appearance. She was one whom a person would pause to look at closely. The face was candid, honest, pensive and melancholy. It expressed intelligence, a poetical temperament, and one would have said that, young as she was, she had had long experience with sorrow of some kind.

As has been said, her face was refined. She was also of delicate organization and, despite her gentle air, there was a natural look of aristocratic ancestry, whatever her rearing had been.

"Hallo, Sim, ole boy!" cried Jack, explosively;

"I'm right glad ter see ye."

"I tol' ye I'd fetch it," Black replied.

Jeffrey glanced quickly at the girl.

"You're all right," he answered.

"Minola," Black added, "this is the gent who's goin' ter take car' on ye now."

The child had been looking earnestly at Jeffrey, and she now started back with a frightened air.

"He is!" she exclaimed.

"Jes' so."

"But I—I thought—"

"That you'd find a more swell friend?"

"Not so much that," faltered the girl, "but I thought—"

Again she paused in embarrassment, but Sim suddenly broke into a laugh.

"Ha! ha! Jack, she expected ter find a more respectable-lookin' gent. Ha! ha!"

The idea pleased him greatly, but it was not so with Jeffrey. He had intended to be gentle, like the hypocrite he could well be, but he lost his head on hearing Sim's banter, and angrily demanded:

"Is that it, gal? Ain't I enough o' a garden rose ter suit yer 'ristocratic taste?"

Minola was even more frightened, and she looked at Black in pathetic appeal.

"Come! Speak out!" Jeffrey added.

"I haven't said anything against you, sir," she replied, in a tremulous voice.

"Don't you dare ter!"

"No; fur he's goin' ter be yer protector an' guardian," explained Black: "the man ter bend yer young mind like an apple-tree, ez the poet says, an' incline the—the bush."

He became wholly lost in his comparison, but the girl scarcely heard him speak. She had eyes only for the Spider. He had taken a violent dislike to her, chiefly because of Black's unlucky, but truthful, explanation; and also because Minola was refined and pretty. This, in Jack's eyes, was a crime; he hated refined people.

His dark scowl made Minola's heart sink like lead, and she suddenly burst into tears, turned and caught Black's hand.

"Oh! take me away!" she cried. "Take me away, I don't want to stay here. Let me go back to the House of Industry!"

"They won't take ye back."

"Oh! they will—I know they will. At least, we can try. Don't leave me here!"

"But I've promised ye ter this gent."

"Yes, an' she's got ter stay!" declared the Spider, pounding his fist on the table. "Come, gal, no more o' yer funny business; I won't stand it. I'd ruther see a hail-storm o' butcher-knives than a woman a-snivelin'. It's all put on, an' it jars my narves. D'y'e hear? I'm delicate, I be; an' can't be irritated. Now, you hush right up, or I'll take hold on ye!"

There was a brutal menace in his words and manner, and Minola did stop. She feared for her life if she failed to obey. Additional terror had fallen upon her, and she would have felt as much at ease in a tiger's cage. Her sobs were checked by fright, and she stood looking at the Spider almost breathlessly.

"That's more like it," he added.

"You'll find this gent werry kind," put in Black.

"Yes; I'm a good-hearted man, an' I'm right fond o' kids like you," said Jack, suddenly remembering that he had made a fool of himself. "You an' me will be royal good friends—reg'lar David an' Jonathan."

Minola continued to look at his brutal face, and a shiver ran over her at the idea of having such a friend.

"Won't you come an' set on my knee?" continued the Spider, with a smile which was a mockery of kindness.

"I had rather not," faltered Minola.

"She ain't quite old enough fur that," observed Black. "At twelve a gal is shy an' on-sart'in, like a day between winter an' summer, but at sixteen they take ter courtin' as nat'r'l as a dog ter a bone."

This bit of philosophy brightened Mr. Black up a good deal; he felt that he had said a brilliant thing, and was only checked in his enthusiasm by the fact that Jeffrey did not applaud.

The latter went on to say to Minola that, in a few days, she would go to a magnificent mansion on the Hudson, up in Westchester county, where all the luxuries of life would be at her disposal, but that, until then, she would remain in her present quarters and be cared for "like a princess by the servants."

All this was fair talk, but Jeffrey's manner gave the lie to his assertions, and the girl was not blind to the fact that the window was boarded up so tightly. She knew she was in a veritable prison, and though she could not understand why any one should wish to shut her up, was

confident that she was in the hands of desperate men.

Her fear of Jeffrey did not abate. His every movement made her start, and all his bland words could not remove the impression that he was a thorough villain.

Poor Minola! Her whole life had been a battle with the extreme evils of poverty, but never before had she been in such peril.

They left her at last, and she dared remonstrate no more. She looked imploringly at Black, and thought longingly of the House of Industry, but his face was as pitiless as that of his companion. Jack's offer of twenty-five dollars had bought Black, body and soul.

The two men walked away, after locking the door.

"Wal, she's caged," said Jeffrey.

"Yes; an' I flatter myself I did a neat job."

"Any trouble at the House o' Industry?"

"Not a bit; ez things was arranged, there couldn't wal be, unless they took far more than usual precautions."

"It's a neat job, an' she's fast in my grip—caught in the Spider's web, as 'twere. Ha! ha!"

"You'll make a boodle out o' this."

"I ketch on, Simeon, an' ef I git a good haul you shall have a share in it. Thar's nothin' mean or stingy about me—I p'int ter my record with pride."

Mr. Jeffrey's face beamed with benevolence, and Black pronounced him a right good fellow, after which they had a drink together, and were very amiable on the surface and false as Judas in reality.

The Spider then started for home. He was in great glee, for he had prisoners who, he believed, would make him a rich man. He felicitated himself on his shrewdness and good luck, and walked into his Baxter street residence in high spirits.

"How's things?" he asked of Durg Dumby.

"All O. K."

"That boy ain't kicked up a row?"

"Not a peep."

"I'll go up an' see him. I suspect that he b'longs somewhere's 'round hyar, an' I mean ter find out who he is."

"Strikes me I've see'd him 'round Paradise Park," observed Durg.

"That so? A Five P'ints kid, eh? Then he is a keener, an' we may hev ter silence ther little snipe. Yes, I'll see him."

And the Spider went up and unlocked Phil's door. Walking in he looked about for the boy, and then stood transfixed with surprise and consternation.

The Pavement Prince was gone!

Yes, the room was vacant, and a hole in one of the walls thereof told how he had gone. Worse than this, the opening was into the room where Mrs. Alden had been imprisoned, and a startling suspicion occurred to Jack. He rushed to the opening. Mrs. Alden was also gone. By this time the Spider's face was the picture of alarm, and he next sought Abe Adkins's room. Again he was almost overwhelmed.

His three prisoners had disappeared!

His angry shouts brought Durg and Black Sam, and they at once began a search. It proved fruitless. The late prisoners had not only gone from their room, but had made good their escape from the house—they were nowhere to be found.

Jack Jeffrey was a very angry man, but as he knew that he would want the services of his allies, he did not venture to express his opinion of them as jailers. One thing only was particularly clear in the case—the imp of Paradise Park had proved that he was a hard bird to hold.

A weak point in the wall had proved his salvation, and he had not only gone, but taken the other captives with him.

"But I'll have 'em ag'in!" declared Jeffrey, as they stood in Phil's late prison-room. "I wouldn't miss Abe Adkins fur a mint o' money; I'll git him ag'in!"

"An' the boy?" added Durg.

"The boy! Oh, jest let me git my grippers on him once more! Jest let me do it! I won't leave a bone whole in his—".

The Spider had worked himself up to a pitch of fury, and his brutal face was red with wrath, but he suddenly ceased speaking as his roving gaze caught upon two lines of writing which had been placed upon the wall in big, black letters. They were as follows:

"I AM GONE!

"I p'int ter my record with pride."

The Spider's face turned blue. It was bad enough to lose his prisoners, but, in his opinion, it was adding insult to injury to have his pet

expression thus thrown in his face. He had to swallow an imaginary obstruction several times before he could speak.

"Oh, I'll make him *howl!*" he then observed.

He was doing the "howling" himself just then, but his allies did not care to mention it.

"We must be up an' doin'," Jeffrey added. "Git ready, men, an' we'll go out an' hunt fur them. I'll have the whole lot back afore mornin', or I'm a liar!"

"Whar'll you hunt?" Durg asked.

"I'll tell ye when we git below. Git yer weapons, an', mind ye, ef you come upon that boy, don't hesitate ter use 'em. A slung-shot over his head would do him good, an' ef you should strike a *leetle* too hard an' fix the critter, I won't never blame ye."

So saying, he led the way to his own room and proceeded to equip his army. He had no doubt of his ability to hunt the fugitives down. Somebody on the street must have seen them as they went away, and besides, he had a pretty clear idea of where Adkins would go.

He anticipated no great trouble in finding the fugitives, and he longed to be revenged on Five Points Phil.

CHAPTER VI.

FIVE POINTS PHIL IN A NEW ROLE.

IT was a plain, small, old-fashioned house on Houston street. Nobody would think of looking at it a second time, unless impelled to do so by something more than its general appearance. In fact, it looked exactly like many other old brick houses on the same street; the hand of Time had fallen heavily upon it, and left only a plain, battle-scarred house—nothing more, in appearance.

Here lived Solomon Richmore. He had lived there for years, yet, if he owned the house, there was something wrong about the records. It stood in another man's name, and Solomon had been the tenant for thirty years.

He professed to be poor, yet he had a whole house to himself.

Some people suspected him of being a rich miser; all agreed that he was mean and penurious. He dressed poorly, though respectably, and lived poorly. He kept two servants, but was said to never pay them anything, but simply to board and clothe them.

They were an old negro couple—very old, and the husband was in his dotage at last. It was to Solomon Richmore's credit, at least, that he did not turn the superannuated servitor out of the house. This negro possessed the romantic name of Washington George.

Until of late the neighbors had seen no sign of relatives near Mr. Richmore, but since he had been in failing health, as he had been for a month, a spruce, high-toned young man, who was named Alfred Stafford, and who claimed to be Solomon's grand-nephew, had been on the scene frequently.

Relatives gather at the death-bed of the rich as the carrion crows assemble to feed on the dead ox, and if the riches be great, no man thinks his elaborate, tailor-made coat too good to go to the bedside of such a man as Solomon Richmore.

The day after the occurrence of the previous events young Stafford—whom the reader has already met—was in Richmore's room.

Solomon was a tall, gaunt old man, with long, obstinate hair which would stand erect on his head; a short, snow-white beard which constant clipping had rendered as stiff and bristly as was possible; and small, peculiar eyes which looked out from beneath heavy eyebrows like creatures in ambush.

He seemed to be a sick man on this day.

"Uncle," said Stafford, blandly, breaking a silence, "the new boy has come."

"Huh!" grunted Richmore.

"Would you like to see him?"

"Has he been paid a week's wages?"

"Not as yet."

"Pay him before he comes. I want nobody to ask me for money. Money—always money! That is the cry of the world. Greed, covetousness, rascality!"

"I, at least, expect nothing, Uncle Solomon."

"Huh!"

It was a peculiar, dry, non-committal sound, and one often heard from Richmore. After a pause, he added:

"This boy—is he a big eater?"

"I don't know; I think not."

"Didn't you inquire before you hired him?"

"No."

"You ought to. Most boys of his age eat voraciously—extravagantly. Should he prove

to be of that sort, I can't have him around. I am a poor man, and he would ruin me. Boys never think to what their appetites lead. Waste and extravagance—that is the way in this world."

"I will do all I can to curtail your expenses."

"I hope so. By the way, do you know whether this boy wants butter with his bread?"

"No, sir."

"That must be learned at once. Go bring the boy!"

Stafford went out with light steps, but, once outside the door, a sneer crossed his face.

"The mean old wretch! he would steal a penny from a dead man's eyes; but let him hoard. There'll be all the more for me, and how I'll make the dollars spin when I get them! I'll cut a dash then, or I'm out of my latitude!"

"The boy" was duly brought before Richmore. As the reader has suspected, he was none other than Five Points Phil. The Spider certainly had not carried out his threat of capturing the Pavement Prince before morning, for there he was, in better condition than ever. Having been brought there by Stafford and Luke Grimes to do their tricky work, they had necessarily provided him with new, though not expensive, clothing.

The sick man looked at the boy, and the boy returned the regard coolly and critically.

"So you're the new help?" said Richmore, after a long pause.

"Assooreddy," Phil serenely replied.

"Do you like butter?"

"I prefer it ter oleomargarine."

"That's not the question. Answer directly, sir!"

"Wal, I ain't qualified to say definitely. Butter arnd me hev not been on werry familiar terms, owin' ter a pecooliar reserve on the part o' butter, arnd its disinclination ter associate with me as marn ter marn—"

"In the name of all lunatics, what rubbish are you talking?" demanded the old man.

"I observed that butter, bein' a monopoly o' the higher arnd purse-proud classes, has never been so pecooliarly sentimental arnd free as ter melt in my mouth—"

"Great heavens! I don't know what you are trying to say, but you can stop right there. I won't hear any more. Bear one thing in mind: there *must* not, SHALL not, be any waste in this house!"

"Assooreddy not."

"You will pay for all you break."

"Jes' so."

"Your hours will be from six A. M. to ten P. M."

"That's a joodicial 'rangement."

"No lights allowed in the house after ten."

"Assooreddy not."

"You will also use the word 'sir,' in addressing me."

"That's the proper caper."

"Are you honest?"

"I presoom so, though, havin' been bred in the lap o' affloence and diligence, with my pockets stuffed out with legal tender, I ain't ez yet been temted."

"Boy, you are the only one of your kind, I should say. Where do you come from?"

"I'm a native product o' the Five Points, arnd an adopted orphn o' the Ten Avenos. Assooreddy! My place o' business is Paradise Park; my abode, Hotel de la Sardine-Box, Baxter street."

"Alfred," querulously cried the invalid, "have you brought a crazy person here?"

"Oh! no, uncle; he is only peculiar. You see, he was the cheapest boy we could find."

"Ah! that's another matter."

"That's whar the joke comes in, boss," exclaimed the imp of Paradise Park. "Froogality arnd me is bosom frien's, arnd you can't expect to procoore a Columby College gradooate fur the sum o' one dollar a week arnd board. Assooreddy not. But the more you see o' me, the more you'll admire me. I'm a plain, straightforward yooth, arnd one o' the white hen's chickens. I ain't the kind o' a Indian pickaninny who smiles arnd is a villain still. Assooreddy not!"

A faint, grim smile crossed Richmore's face. He was becoming used to the quaint small boy who stood there as gravely as a statue, and talked in such a strange, amusing way.

"I think you'll do," he said abruptly. "Tell the cook to give you a piece of butter the size of a walnut at every meal. Do you hear?"

"I do, arnd I am grateful. Your moonificent generosity teches my heart, and I'll eat that butter ef I die of an overdose!"

The sharp eyes of the invalid looked out from under his bushy eyebrows more sharply than

eve, but he said no more. Phil went away and the men were left together.

"Alfred," said Richmore, speaking suddenly again, "have you seen Grimes lately?"

"I saw him only yesterday. It was he who selected the new boy."

"So you said before, but I had forgotten it. My mind is not what it once was. Do you know if Grimes has inquired for a suitable party to transact my business?—you know what I mean."

"Yes, sir; and Luke has seen a lawyer."

"Does that lawyer understand that I will not submit to exorbitant prices?"

"I am sure Luke arranged that."

"Good! But I hate to have him come; lawyers are sharks; they will steal a man's last cent. But so will all men. Alfred, there is a great deal of meanness and dishonesty in this world."

"Unfortunately you are only too right, sir."

"I wish you were my direct heir; I could thereby save the expense of a will."

"That is a fact, sir."

"It is throwing money away—literally throwing it away. But it must be done to prevent the Careys getting the miserable pittance I shall leave. I could not rest after death if I thought they had profited by my demise."

"That is for you to decide, Uncle Solomon," said Stafford, craftily.

"By the way, do you ever hear of them?"

"No, sir."

"Robert had a child, a daughter. What became of her, I wonder."

"Indeed, I don't know. I had nearly forgotten there was such a child."

"I am not an implacable man—far from it—but if I could hear that all that tribe were suffering, it would smooth my last hours greatly. Ingratitude really ought to be punished, hadn't it, Alfred?"

"Certainly, sir; and perhaps Robert is in prison, somewhere."

"Ha! a capital idea. I wish I knew."

"Perhaps I can learn something about him."

"Without expense?"

"Possibly so, sir."

"Well, if you can, without expense—mind you, without expense!—you may do so. But don't spend a dollar, and if you learn that he, and his, are in good circumstances, don't tell me. And now, Alfred, if you will leave me, I will try to sleep. It is a blessed, inexpensive luxury!"

CHAPTER VII.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

FIVE POINTS PHIL went about his new duties with the zeal of one who expects to fill a certain position all his life, and is anxious to excel. Yet he expected nothing of the kind, and was in Richmore's house with a purpose not apparent on the surface.

When first approached by Luke Grimes he knew that some villainy was afoot, and that he was selected because he was expected to help the villains of the drama readily. That such an opinion had been formed of him did not cause him mental disquiet.

He was ragged, and he lived at the Five Points; in the opinion of many, this was proof positive that he was a scamp.

He analyzed his employers on more scientific principles than their own mode. He knew Grimes to be an adventurer and sharper, and Alfred a weak, vicious-minded young man of the shoddy aristocracy.

Perceiving that they had some villainy afoot, he at once determined to accept their offer, enter their service, find out what their scheme was, and then defeat it. This explains how he happened to be an inmate of Richmore's house.

His work was that once done by Washington George, the aged negro, and he was Mrs. George's assistant about such work as was in his line. During the day he made every possible effort to win the old woman's affections—and to get her to talk.

He relied upon her to get an inkling of the mystery.

This first day developed nothing, however, but he did get her good will to such an extent that, when he said he would like to go out in the evening, she cheerfully bade him go. He went, regardless of the fact that Solomon Richmore had said his hours of duty would last until ten o'clock.

Leaving the house, he was soon on Macdougal street, and proceeding north. He took great care not to be dogged, and finally stopped at a certain house. He was readily admitted, and was soon in the presence of a man and woman.

They were Abe Adkins and Mrs. Alden.

He was cordially greeted, and given a chair.

"I perceive the rarpacious hawks ain't descended onter ye yet," he said, in his usual deliberate manner.

"Thank heaven, no," Adkins replied.

"Hope ye ain't been rarsht doorn' the day."

"We have not been out."

"Nor nigh the winder?"

"Why, yes; we have been to the window, more or less."

"That war rarsht; it assoorely was. Sposin' Jack Jeffrey had been passin'?"

"There was only a remote chance of that."

"Wal, the remoter you keep from that winder the safer you'll be. I give ye a tip onter that."

"We shall leave here in the morning," said Mrs. Alden. "I feel that the refuge selected by me will be far safer, and it will be ready for us then."

"Wal, I wanter say one word. Ef you think the pison Spider is goin' ter settle down and let ye slide easy, you'll git left. I don't know what's the trouble with you, Abram, nor ye needn't tell me—I kin see you ain't no fungus sharp—but ef John J., the Spider, hez got a holt onter ye, he'll be arter ye; arnd ef he ain't, he'll be arter ye, 'cause he knows he is a lame dog, arnd needs ter fear yer givin' him away. He's bound ter be arter ye anyway. Assoorely."

"I thank you very much, my boy. You did a brave, noble deed when you got us out of Jeffrey's grasp, and I hope to reward you some day."

"Never mind that; I helped ye 'cause I felt sure you was one o' the white hen's chickens. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn."

"How do you like your new place?" Mrs. Alden kindly asked.

"I'm b'ilin' over with onadulterated admiration. I've fallen among nabobs, 'ristercrats, princes arnd dukes—mebbe thieves. Ye see, a marn may smile arnd be a villain still."

"Who are you working for?" Adkins carelessly asked.

"A royal Bengawl chief who's a direct descendant o' one o' the Bible characters. I refer ter Solomon. My chief is Solomon Richmore. Now, he may not be—"

"Who did you say?" cried Mrs. Alden, sharply.

"Who? Oh! his name. It's Rich—I mean, Solomon Richmore. He's one o' the popularity."

"Ah!"

The aspiration was from Mrs. Alden's lips, and was of such a peculiar nature that Phil looked at her in surprise. The expression of her face increased his wonder, and he added:

"Hi! do you know him?"

"Only too well."

"Then you ain't proud on't?"

"I certainly am not."

"No," added Adkins, in a hard voice, "Solomon Richmore is not a man any one should be proud of—we know him, as my sister said, only too well."

"I've got an idee," quoth Phil.

"Have you?"

"Yes. Hain't he a relative o' yours?"

Adkins hesitated, looked at Mrs. Alden, and then slowly replied:

"You may as well know the truth; he is our uncle. Our mother was his sister—more's the pity. I am trusting you a good deal, my lad, in saying this, for you could work us untold injury by betraying our secret. As you already know, I am a hunted man, and Solomon Richmore would gladly give me over to the law."

"He's a pestiferous critter, ain't he?"

"He is a hard, unjust, unfeeling man, who is more bitter against his own relatives than any one else."

"A joodicious duckin' in the East River would be pecooliarly good fur him; I hate ter say it ag'in' my employer, but fax is fax, arnd they is stubborn. But why's he so down on ye?"

"It would be a long story to tell how he daily grew more miserly, denying himself the comforts of life, and avoiding his relatives simply because he feared they would be an expense to him. He never liked me, and I never troubled him until the time came when my mother was dying in extreme poverty—in actual want. I went to Richmore; he refused to give me a dollar."

"He is a pestiferous critter."

"Then we had a quarrel. I told him plainly what I thought of his heartless course; he drove me from the house with hot, angry words. From that day—twenty years ago—we have been strangers."

"No loss ter you, by gracious!"

"The worst is yet to come. Phil, all the world but you knows the secret of my troubles, and as you could learn by a little inquiry, I may as well tell all and trust to your honor."

"You may, with parfict safety. I never kick a lame dog when he's gittin' over a fence."

"Twelve years ago I became the junior partner in a mercantile house in this city. Ill Luck had always pursued me, but I thought the tide had turned when an old family friend advanced me ten thousand dollars to go into business as before stated. It was a large sum to loan a poor man, but he required the firm to become responsible for the money, and they did so."

"I thought myself on the road to fortune then, but this event, which seemed such a blessing, proved to be my ruin. A few years after the firm suffered heavily by a forgery which took several thousand dollars from them. Boy, I swear that I was as innocent of that crime as you, yet I was branded the forger, and circumstances were terribly against me. I was ruined; I became a fugitive on the earth."

"It is from this that my present danger arises. I have been in Europe, but have come back, sick almost to death of exile. But I am in great peril here. Only the other evening I was recognized on the street, where I had rashly ventured, and, to escape, I knocked down an officer of law."

"This was a real misdemeanor, to name it lightly, and one which may yet cause me trouble. You see that I am hemmed in by danger. I have trusted in you—why, I don't know—only I feel instinctively that you are to be trusted. If you betray me, I suppose nothing can save me from Sing Sing."

Adkins's voice trembled, and the Pavement Prince hastened to reply:

"Ef you sail along saloobrious ontil I give ye away, you'll be ez safe ez a mice. I ain't no Judas. The first Judas got hisself so unpopular that I don't keer ter take up his trade. Assoorely not!"

"I believe you. But about Solomon Richmore. When I was accused of forgery my partners were inclined to be lenient, but he—my uncle—came forward and urged them to prosecute me. Do you wonder I have no love for him?"

"Now I've heerd the fax, I don't. Fax is stubborn things. So is Solomon. He's a pestiferous, contrary mule. Say, do you know one Alfred Stafford?"

"I do, indeed. He is the son of my cousin. I knew him well when he was a boy, but have not seen him for six years—though I did see a young fellow at Jack Jeffrey's who looked like him."

"Like ez not 'twas him. He's at Richmore's."

"Ah!"

"Arnd, as nigh as I can figger it, he's fishin' fur the old man's money."

"It is very probable."

"But you're the direct heir-outlaw, ter use a legal phrase, ain't ye?"

"Yes."

"That young fungus sharp ought not ter cut ye out."

"Let him do it; I want none of Richmore's money."

"But it belongs ter you."

"It would burn my fingers. I want no part of the miser's hoard."

Phil was silent, but his mind was very busy, and the subject thereof was Richmore's money, but at that moment the door unceremoniously opened and three burly men walked in unannounced. The leader flashed a quick glance around the room, and then walked up to Adkins, and laid his hand on that man's shoulder.

"Robert Carey," he said, in a stern voice, "I am a detective, and I arrest you in the name of law!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PHIL IS PUZZLED.

THE entrance of the officers had alarmed Adkins at the start. Their official appearance was not necessary to arouse his fears, for he saw an enemy in every man who looked at him. A careless glance, which would pass unnoticed by an honest man, is a spur of menace to a troubled mind or guilty conscience; and Adkins had the first, if not the last.

He sat like one paralyzed as the man made known his errand, while Mrs. Alden uttered a faint cry and sunk back in her chair, pale and overwhelmed.

Five Points Phil felt himself called upon to say something, and he did so promptly.

"General, you're way off yer latitudo. You've got the wrong train fur Troy. This hyar marn ain't wot yer take him for. He's a 'spectable person, named John Quincy Short. He's got perlitical infloence, too; don't git him r'iled up."

"Who asked you to speak?"

"Dooty did it, arnd I did my dooty."

Five Points Phil, the Pavement Prince.

"Well, we don't want any of your interference."

"Allow me to observe that I am this man's guardian, and it's my duty to speak. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn. This man ain't no pestiferous crimin'nal."

"I know him, and I dare say you are one of the gang. I shall take you along, too."

"Me?"

"Exactly."

"Arrest me?"

"Yes."

"What fur? What's the charge? In what way hev I broken the laws arnd statos o' this village?"

"I merely arrest you on suspicion, and you do look like a criminal. If you prove to be all right, you shall go free after a bit."

Phil crooked his forefinger, and shook it gravely at the officer.

"Now, you want ter hold yer hosses. Rein 'em in arnd don't wear their shoes all off. I may look like a fungus sharp, but I'm in disguise. This face o' mine is false; take me in my nat'r'nal wood, arnd I look as sweet as the first infant in an average family; arnd he's allays a hummer arnd an angel on skates—"

"That will do. You can all go along with us."

Mrs. Alden came forward quickly. Up to that time she had been sitting like one dazed, though her white face told what she suffered.

"Sir," she said, in a tremulous voice, "I beg that you will have mercy on my poor brother. He is an innocent, unfortunate man. Have pity, and I will bless you forever. Oh! don't take him away!"

"Duty is duty," was the inexorable reply.

"But he is innocent."

"That's for the judge to determine, not me. He'll have to go with us."

"I suppose I owe all this to Jack Jeffrey!" said Adkins, bitterly.

"Who is he?"

"Don't you know?"

"Never heard of him."

"You are just as well off; let it pass. Go with you! Certainly; I will go at once. I believe that I shall be happier when I am inside the Tombs; the suspense will be over then, and liberty—even life—is worth nothing to me. But my sister and this boy—why should they be arrested?"

"It's orders; that's all I know. Don't say anything more about it; you've all got to go, and time is precious. Hurry up, and we will get out."

They had few preparations to make, and were soon going out of the house. Mrs. Alden was weeping bitterly, though silently, and only Five Points Phil carried himself coolly. Of course he had nothing to fear, in reality, but he would have been philosophical anyway.

A cab stood at the door. The leading officer entered with the three prisoners, while the others mounted to the box. Then the vehicle rolled away. Even the Pavement Prince neglected to take notice of their route—each one of the prisoners was busily thinking. Phil was particularly disturbed because he bade fair to lose his position at Richmore's, and thus lose the chance of outwitting Alfred Stafford in his schemes, but he accepted the inevitable coolly, and tried to enliven the occasion with a few general remarks.

At the end of half an hour the cab halted.

"I have a few minutes' business here," said the officer; "sorry to keep you waiting, but your time will be your own when once you get to the lock-up."

With this grim remark he clambered out, reclosed the cab door, and the trio were left to themselves again. Phil at once began to talk; but had said only a few words when the door again opened. This time one of the other officers stood there.

"See here! let me give you a tip," he said, speaking rapidly. "I ain't the worst man that ever was, and I've got a fellow-feeling for you. The boss is inside, and my advice to you is—skip!"

"Skip?" echoed Phil.

"That's it—skip!"

"Won't you stop us?"

"No."

"Arnd be you an orficer?"

"Never mind; I ain't in sympathy with the boss. I'm willing you should run away, and I advise you to do it. Skip—run—scoot! Get out of here, and hide elsewhere, but don't go back where we took you from. That house is spotted, and it's sure poison to you. Are you going, or will you sit there like mummies, and let Ruger come back and settle your case?"

The man spoke impatiently, and Phil sprung from the cab.

"Ef there's any chance ter skip, you kin put me down on the invento y ez a skipper!" he declared.

Mrs. Alden promptly followed, and Adkins was not far behind. He had a suspicion that this was only a scheme to envelop them in additional trouble—by rearresting them while they were trying to escape—but the allurements of liberty were not to be resisted.

The leader of their captors was invisible, and Phil took charge of the retreat at once. They were near a corner, and he led his companions around, out of sight, at once. As they went, he glanced up at the signs on the street-lamp.

"Hudson street and Charlton," he observed.

"Is it possible?" asked Mrs. Alden, with a start.

"Yes. Why?"

"Then we are near the new home I have selected for my brother and myself. Let us make haste, and get there before we are seen."

"Assooreddy. The dice seem fallin' in our favor jest now, arnd I must say the honest folks or'er hev a show now arnd then. Fax is fax, arnd they is stubborn."

They were burrying up the street as he spoke, but Mrs. Alden suddenly paused before a humble, but respectable-looking, house, applied a key to the door and opened it. All entered, and even Phil breathed a sigh of relief. Unless they had been seen to pass in, they had a welcome reprieve.

Mrs. Alden led the way up-stairs, entered a side-room, lighted the gas, and they found themselves in a decent room—a most inviting-looking place just then.

"Here is our new home," said the little woman. "The room is not fully put to rights, you see, but it is just as well. We can be happy here—if they will only let us alone."

She sat down, acting like one suffering from great bodily weakness. Adkins laid his hand caressingly upon hers.

"I am very sorry you should suffer thus for me," he said, in a broken voice.

"Am I not your sister?"

"Thank Heaven, yes."

"And I am willing to make your lot, mine."

"I'm orffully puzzled," interrupted Phil.

"How so?"

"By the way things has worked."

"I suppose you refer to our escape. That was, indeed, a peculiar affair; I see it more particularly now than ever before. Why did the first officer leave? Why did the others turn against him? Was it professional jealousy? Possibly, but how will they clear themselves? It's a serious matter to let prisoners escape."

"You sum that up like a lawyer, but thar is one thing more that stumps me—thar assooreddy is."

"What is that?"

"Why in the name of Patrick Henry Calhoun did they drive us over ter this deestrick o' the village! Nat'rally, they'd a-tooken us ter the Tombs, at once. What was we over hyar fur, anyhow? It's pecooliar, b'gosh."

"Perhaps they had some errand here."

"Officers don't ginerally go visitin' with prisoners in charge. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn; they assooreddy be."

"It is peculiar."

"Peculiar! It's right marvelous, so ter speak. I can't onnerstand it, my b'loved contemporary; I really can't. Strikes me the artmosphere is fool o' myst'ry."

"At any rate, we are again free."

Phil crooked his finger in the old fashion, and waved it slowly before Adkins.

"Don't build deloosive hopes outer this. A marn may smile, arnd be a villain still. I smell smoke."

"What do you suspect?"

"It's what I don't suspect that troubles me; I can't ketch on, so ter speak. Myst'ry hangs over us like a ward politician's record—dark arnd dingy."

Adkins and his sister agreed that the situation was peculiar, but they did not seem to attach so much importance to it as Phil did. Some time was passed in speculation, and then Phil announced that he must return to Richmore's. The hour was growing late, and he did not want to test Mrs. George's patience too much.

He took the liberty of giving Adkins some advice before he went, and as it was in the way of caution, it was sensible and timely. Then he left the house.

Before passing outside he reconnoitered carefully, and then, failing to see any spy, he set off briskly for his destination.

He could not keep his mind from the event of the evening, which still puzzled him greatly, and in his deep meditation he, for once, forgot to be cautious.

As a result, a strange man, who had fallen in behind him almost as soon as he started, was able to dog him undetected, and he did this steadily as Phil drew near Richmore's.

CHAPTER IX. THE MISER'S WILL.

FIVE POINTS PHIL would have been greatly troubled had he known the facts of the case. Despite the care he had taken in leaving the house he had been seen at once by the spy, who had been hiding in a deep doorway, and this man had followed persistently, yet cautiously. The fact that he kept well back showed that his purpose was not to overtake the boy, but simply to see where he went.

His curiosity was satisfied at last; he saw Phil enter Richmore's house, and then he took out a note-book and wrote down the number. This done, he went quietly away.

All this was suspicious, and would have filled Phil with anger at his own want of caution, if he had known of it. Plainly, the man had some deep purpose in mind, and he had gained his end. He knew where Phil lived. What trouble would have been upset had he known all.

For once he had stumbled in his natural shrewdness, and it had been just when he ought to have been most on the alert, it seemed.

Unconscious of all this the boy retired, and fell asleep wondering over the events of the evening.

He was up in good time the following morning, and went zealously about his work. Once more he made an effort to win the old colored woman's heart, and to get her to talk on subjects of interest to him.

In a measure he was successful. He got her to talk about Richmore and his relatives, although she was cautious, and would not betray where her own sympathies lay. She admitted that the old man was probably worth a good deal of money, though she had no idea where it was, or in what form it existed.

A certain Robert Carey was his heir, but he had irrevocably quarreled with the younger man, and she did not know what had become of him. Alfred Stafford seemed destined to secure all, by will, when Richmore died.

Phil was not able to learn what Mrs. George thought of any of the lot; if she was opposed to Stafford, she saw the probability that he would be the heir, and would not run the risk of giving offense to the powers that were to be.

About the middle of the forenoon Phil was summoned to the old man's room. He went, and found Richmore alone, propped up in bed. He looked more gaunt than ever, but his small eyes were keen enough.

"Sit down!" he said, curtly.

"Assooreddy," Phil composedly replied.

"You're a queer stick, aren't you?"

"If you say so, I must be. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn things."

"So you're called Five Points Phil?"

"Jes' so."

"Have you always lived in that delectable region?"

"No; not always. I wa'n't born until sixteen year ago."

"Don't you be too sharp, young fellow!" sternly exclaimed Richmore.

"Assooreddy not."

"Do you remember that I told you to address me as 'sir'?"

"I b'lieve you did tol' me thusly."

"I haven't heard you do so yet."

"Werry likely not; I may hav overlooked it."

"Do you know that the world says I am rich?"

"Yes."

"Others fawn upon me, hoping to get a slice of my money. Why don't you? Why don't you call me 'sir'? Why don't you act politely toward me?"

"Now you introduce a subject o' some magnitood. Bein' as you are my boss, o' course I sharll hev ter answer. You see, I don't want any o' yer money, arnd I ain't goin' ter git down on my knees, and wear my pants all out, on the slim chance o' gettin' yer royal favor. Assooreddy not! I don't banker ter rob yer rightful heirs, ez some folks do."

The small, keen eyes glittered under the bushy white brows, and Richmore sharply demanded:

"What do you mean?"

"Salomon, d'ye warn't me ter speak out, plump arnd square?"

"I do. Go on!"
 "Mebbe I sharil be rood arnd onpleasant."
 "Never mind. Speak your thoughts plainly. I should never have called you in here to-day, had I not recognized in you an original. I want to be amused by your eccentricities. Speak out!"

"Fax is fax, arnd I deem it my dooty ter say that my eccentricities may not be pecooliarly amoosin'."

"Never mind," was the grim reply. "I want you to speak."

"Jes' so! Wal, I'll remark that I don't a'prove o' the way you're goin' down ter yer grave, un-honored and unsung, ez the poick says. Solomon, you've let yerself be run off the main track, arnd be switched onto a pestiferous side-track, whar only cattle-cars are s'posed ter be put up."

The imp of Paradise Park had crooked his forefinger, as was his custom, and was giving Richmore a gesture for nearly every word.

"Explain!" was the curt command.

"I ain't got nothin' ter say ag'in' yer livin' in exile, solitude arnd squarlor, for that is yer private affair, but when you git done with yer gold-bags, it is 'cordin' ter common sense arnd jestice that you dispose of them in a Christian arnd becomin' marner."

The bushy white brows had come down in a frown until the sharp eyes bade fair to be wholly obscured. Brusquely enough, Richmore replied:

"Perhaps you will use your *mature* wisdom to tell me how to dispose of my money?"

"Assoorely," placidly answered Five Points Phil. "Harpy ter oblige yer. First o' all, you should *not* let Alfred Stafford hev a red."

"No?"

The question was sarcastic, but Phil was not troubled.

"Jes' so—no! Wherefore? 'Cause he's cringin', arnd crawlin', arnd fawnin' around, jest ter git yer money; arnd when he succeeds he'll make it fly like locomotive sparks, arnd call ye an old fool fur yer work. That's blunt, I allow. but fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

"Of course I am not offended at an opinion so delicately expressed," the grim old miser returned. "Now, having told me what *not* to do with my reputed wealth, maybe you will tell me what *to* do with it?"

"Assoorely. I'm obligin', arnd always willin' ter bend my gigantic mind ter the helpin' o' needy marn. I will tell ye. Who's yer heir-outlaw?"

"No matter!" sternly replied Richmore, and, if such a thing was possible, his frown grew more pronounced.

"Why, it's Robert Carey, o' course."

"Well?"

"Wal, he's the man fur yer money."

"Boy, do you know you are venturing on very delicate ground?"

"I know the ice is pestiferously thin. Jes' so! I am wal aware that you are down on Rob, right from the word go. But, Solomon, you're 'way off yer base; you ain't half so wise ez the first Solomon, though ye live in a more enlightened age. Now, I know Rob, arnd he's one o' the white hen's chickens. A good marn he is; honist, upright arnd downright; but assoorely a child o' misfortun. Solomon, you in yer glory don't know w'ot it is ter hev Misfortun barkin' at yer heels like a hungry dog negotiatin' fur a bone. I pity Rob!"

"I don't."

"No?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"He's a proud upstart, a forger, embezzler—"

"Drawr it mild, Solomon."

"Don't dictate to me, boy!"

"You axed me in hyar, arnd tol' me ter talk; you said you warnted ter be amoosed by my eccentricities. Now don't yer throw up yer own contract. What you need is plain talk. You've had grov'lin' hypercritics arnd money-hunters 'round ye too long; folks who wouldn't speak their minds 'cause they warnted ter be polite, arnd git yer money. Waitin' fur dead men's shoes, d'yee see? Alfred Stafford is one o' that sort, arnd the most pestiferous o' the lot—he's makin' a fool on ye. That's blunt, but it's true, and fax is stubborn things."

"Are you done?"

"Not quite."

"Go on; free your mind, by all means."

"Assoorely. Wal, Solomon, you see you're blind ez a bat. You've turned yer back on yer own flesh arnd blood, arnd used Rob Carey so darned mean I wonder you kin sleep o' nights. What ef he was accused o' forgery? It was yer

duty ter defend him, not drag him down. He was yer sister's son; yer own flesh an' blood, yer see; arnd you did a wrong thing when you turned ag'in' him. Solomon, I wouldn't have your conscience for one-half o' Hoboken, arnd a corner lot in Walla Walla, or Oshkosh, throwed in!"

And Five Points Phil punctuated these remarks by incessant waving of his bent forefinger.

Richmore was looking at him grimly, and his bristly beard and stubborn hair had never before seemed to stand so erect, nor his stern old face to be so aggressive.

"Go on!" he tersely directed.

"I've got ter ther last chapter, arnd I'll make it short. Ef you let Alfred Stafford bamboozle ye, you're a bigger goose than you look ter be."

A strange chuckle broke from the miser's lips.

"Boy, I'll disappoint you, like all my other toadying relatives. To-day I make a will leavin' all my property to Alfred Stafford!"

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Yer won't listen ter reason!"

"Huh! do you think me a fool? I know you are here as Robert Carey's agent."

"Not by a blamed sight. I ain't nobody's stool-pigeon."

"Well, let it pass. Drop Carey. To-day, I will all to Alfred."

"The goddess o' Justice will weep bitter when ye do it."

"Let her weep!" retorted the old man.

"I s'pose I'm discharged, ain't I?"

"Discharged! For what reason?"

"'Cause I've talked so blunt and brash ter you."

"Again the dry, non-committal chuckle.

"Certainly not. Why should I discharge you when, at my request, you have *amused* me?"

"Hev you been amoosed?" asked Phil, slowly, for, cool and philosophical as he was, he could not understand Richmore fully, nor get along with him as he did with others.

"Yes."

"I'm glad on't; I assoorely be; but I didn't s'pose I had hit the mark exactly."

"I thought you an original, and you have proved it. I forgive your blunt speeches, for you have *amused* me. Now, go; the lawyer will soon be here, and I want my will made in favor of Alfred."

Phil opened his lips to speak, hesitated, arose, walked to the door, hesitated again, and then turned and tersely remarked:

"I hope yer conscience won't never trouble ye!"

Another moment and he was gone.

He went down-stairs and resumed his work faithfully. He had expected to be questioned by Mrs. George, but the old colored woman remained as discreet as ever, and he was not troubled. His mind, however, was busy, and as he remembered all that he said to Richmore, and that the latter declared at the end that he had been *amused*, he was free to acknowledge that the old miser was a mystery to him.

Half an hour later the door-bell rung, and he had the pleasure of ushering in his friends, Alfred Stafford and Luke Grimes, together with a third man whom Phil at once set down as a lawyer.

The crisis was at hand. The vultures were on the scene, and unless some merciful chance interfered, a will would soon be made which would leave Solomon Richmore's money to the young knave who was scheming for it.

CHAPTER X.

A MYSTERY AT NIGHT.

STAFFORD and Grimes were in a state of great excitement, though they concealed it as much as possible. If they could get Richmore to make the coveted will they would be rich men in prospective; at present, they were in financial troubles.

Alfred and his sister—a vain, shallow girl—lived with some pretense to style, but their efforts to keep afloat had been desperate, and Alfred was obliged to walk the streets with a wary eye for creditors.

Grimes had at once been his salvation and his bane; he had led Alfred steadily along the road to ruin, but had paved the way with gifts of money which his would-be aristocratic friend was not too scrupulous to accept.

And who was Grimes? Briefly, he was a sharper; a gambler, "confidence man," "bunco-steerer" and decoy-in-general. He, however, wished to marry Clara Vere Stafford, so he helped brother and sister when he could, and all schemed persistently for Richmore's money.

A fine trio of vultures to hover over a dying man.

Richmore received them in his room, but looked sharply at Singer, the lawyer.

"So you want to draw up my will, eh?" he brusquely said, when introduced.

"I was informed that you wished me to do so," was the bland reply.

"Your charges are too high."

"I thought my figure moderate."

"Hush! you're a *lawyer*!" the miser exclaimed, as though that settled the whole case. "Vampires are also very modest and moderate!"

Mr. Singer had been prepared for this, and he had also been told that if he was asked to discount his price, the deficit would be made good by Grimes. As his feelings were not tender, the last remarks did not wound them; he made a gentle reply, and showed no temper.

"You must come down one dollar on your figure," Richmore persisted.

Singer hesitated, and then observed that, as long as his client was a *neighbor*, he would do as requested; whereupon the miser uttered his old chuckle.

"Good! Now draw up the will. Make it brief; make it strong. If you leave a loop-hole for it to be broken after I am dead, I will come back from the grave and haunt you. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get your pen in motion. You can frame the important part with all the legal rubbish you wish, provided it is legal, but the pith of the matter will be short and sweet. The long and short of it is, I bequeath all I possess, in whatever form it may be found—money, bonds, mines, railroads, vessels, houses, mercantile businesses, inventions, life insurance policies, pawnshops or old rags—mind, I don't say *how it exists*—I bequeath all this equally to my deeply loved nephew, Alfred Stafford, and his fair sister, Clara Vere Stafford. Ask no questions; put it down. An equal division between the two, you understand, and not a dollar—not a cent—to any one else. Understand?"

Sharply, querulously the voice arose, and the speaker glared at Singer from under his bushy white brows as though some injury had been done him by the lawyer.

Mr. Singer answered moderately, and in a few minutes his busy pen had written the brief will. Stafford and Grimes almost held their breath. It was a moment of keen, painful suspense. The lawyer's work was done at last, and he laid the document before Richmore.

The latter looked at it long, sharply, suspiciously. It was unusually simple for a will, yet he seemed to think he was being imposed upon. He was not, as far as the wording of the will was concerned; Singer had made it iron-clad.

Satisfied at last, Richmore sent out for two disinterested persons, and the will was soon signed by them as witnesses to the signature he put down with great care.

The deed was done; Stafford and his sister were the heirs at last, and the plotters would have been pleased to see the old man drop off at once with heart disease, or something as swift and sure. But Singer had another duty, upon which he had been instructed by Alfred and Grimes.

"Now, Mr. Richmore," he said, blandly, "there is one thing more. You have referred rather indefinitely to the form in which your wealth will be found. Since I am now your legal adviser, would it not be well for you to inform me where, and in what form, your possessions exist? There might be trouble to find them, you know, for I am sure no one has the least idea. Why, some people aver that you have nothing at all! It would facilitate the settlement of your estate if I knew all about the matter at the start."

Richmore had listened without a change of countenance, but his hair and beard now seemed to bristle more than ever.

"Huh!" he exclaimed, "so you've already got me under the ground, eh? So I'm a dead man the moment my will is made, eh? So you're already 'settling my estate,' eh? Humph! how the carrion crows *will* gather!"

Bitter and cynical was this outburst, and his eyes glittered angrily.

"My dear sir," Singer cried, "you wrong me. I do not ask this of you; it was only a suggestion from a legal man. Of course you will use your own judgment."

"Most decidedly, I shall." Richmore grimly replied. "You have this will—take it home and lock it up. There is a man—Carey by name—who might try to steal it. If you allow him to do so, I will ruin you."

"Nobody shall steal it, sir."

"Good! Now you can go; you can all go. I want to be alone, and sleep. To sleep! Possibly I shall never awake, but my will is made. Mr. Singer, I may have been rude to you; if so, allow me to say that I hope when I am dead you, a neighbor, will not be disturbed by the sound of bitter lamentation which my heart-broken heirs will send out to the four winds of heaven!"

It was a bitter sneer, delivered with all his sarcasm, and before any one could answer he brusquely added:

"What, ain't you gone yet? I said I wanted to be alone. I'll excuse you all!"

He turned his face aside, and they went out carefully.

"A deuced queer old blade!" commented Singer.

"Well, the will's made, anyhow," observed Grimes.

"I don't like his manner," thoughtfully added Alfred.

"Hang his manner! What do we care now he's willed all as it should go?"

"The will can't be broken," the lawyer averred.

And then all the party left the house with the exception of Stafford. He remained in the dingy sitting-room, more because his suspicions had been aroused by his grand-uncle's bitter manner, and he wanted to make sure a second lawyer did not follow the first and make a new will, than for any other reason.

Two hours he kept his place, and then summoned Five Points Phil.

The boy came in, as cool and easy as ever.

"Phil, you have a good place here through my aid."

"Assooreedly."

"And you ought to be willing to work for me."

"Ef you hev any work ter be done, trot it out, boss. I'm a reg'lar flea fur usefulness."

"Rather indefinite, but I wint to say that I wish you to make a note of all persons who come here. This is not hard; perhaps no one except me will call for a week. But if there is a caller, I want to know all about it. Could you follow him home?"

"Could I? Assooreedly! I was the individual who give Buffalo Bill arnd Kit Carson their first lessons in trailin'. Oh! I am a reg'lar Sioux on the war-path."

"Good! Well, do what I have indicated, and I will reward you well. There's money in it."

And Alfred took his departure, confident that the fort was as well garrisoned as it could be. But he left the Pavement Prince in a down-hearted mood. The boy knew that the unjust will had been made, and he was angry at Richmore and nearly everybody else.

The day passed; night came, and wore along slowly. Phil did not go out, but retired at ten o'clock. He did not at once fall asleep, however, and he was busily thinking when he heard a sound which caused him to suddenly sit up in bed.

Unless he was mistaken, it was the closing of the front door.

"What's that?" he muttered. "Burglars? The bell didn't ring, and I don't reckon any inmate o' this 'ere house is goin' out at this hour."

He listened a little further, and then sprung out of bed and hurriedly dressed. This done, he went into the hall. All was quiet there. He crept down the first flight of stairs, and then made a discovery. There was a light burning in Richmore's room—an unusual thing at that time of night.

He could see the light at the crack under the door, and also at the key-hole.

Was the miser worse? He mentally asked the question, and was about to glide forward and investigate, when he made a new discovery. Some one was standing in the hall, before Richmore's door, like a sentinel on guard.

"Looks more'n like burglars—it assooreedly does!" thought the boy.

Suddenly the person on guard coughed lightly. The sound was a revelation; it was not new to Phil. He knew that the person was Mrs. George, the colored housekeeper. This was a discovery, but he did not understand at all why she was standing before her master's door, in the dark, at such an hour.

The clock struck twelve as he made the discovery.

Phil was full of curiosity, but he did not think it prudent to advance. The fact that Mrs. George was there seemed to decide that he had no cause to interfere, and he cautiously went back to the head of the stairs.

There he crouched and awaited developments.

Ten minutes passed, and then all signs of a light in Mr. Richmore's room disappeared; then

the door was opened, and at least two persons came out. Phil judged that they were men. He strained his eyes and ears to learn more, but they did not speak, and he could see absolutely nothing.

The entire party went down the lower stairs.

"Wal, now," thought the Pavement Prince. "here is a thoroughbred mystery; there assooreedly is. What's up? Kin it be Mrs. G. Washington George has turned ag'in the miser, too, and is arter her share o' the plunder? Hez she let in burglars, or assassins? The case looks ugly—I smell smoke, so ter speak. Great ginger! I can't stand this onscart'nty; I'm goin' down ter investigate. Assooreedly!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SPIDER REAPPEARS.

With all possible caution Five Points Phil crept down the stairs until he reached the lower floor. There he nearly had an encounter, for Mrs. George was just returning from the front door. She had let the unknown visitors out, and was on her way to her own quarters.

Phil stepped back into a recess, and let her pass, which she did without seeing him, and then he hurried to the front door. The key was in the lock; he turned it, passed out, relocked the door, put the key in his pocket, and then took to the street.

As chance would have it casual passers-by were not numerous just then, and he could see few moving objects as he darted a quick glance up and down the street.

He did see a man just turning a corner—two men, he thought, although he was not sure—and felt sure they were the ones he wanted to see. He ran quickly in that direction. When he reached the corner no pedestrians were in sight, but a cab was rolling briskly away, being then over a block distant.

"It's them!" muttered the boy. "The pestiferous critters had the cab waitin'. Wal, I'm goin' ter run it down, by ginger, and see what sort o' cattle they be!"

And away he went at full speed.

The cab had a good start, but he was gaining perceptibly when it increased its speed and the race became closer. Still, he was not to be discouraged, and he sped over the sidewalk with light, quick steps. Every moment he expected to see a policeman, who would try to hold him, but this did not occur.

Something else did.

The cab turned a corner, and Phil was doing the same thing when he ran plump into a pedestrian, and both were nearly knocked down by the collision. As they recovered their balance, and stood facing each other in the bright light, Phil made a startling discovery.

This man was Jack Jeffrey, the Spider.

Phil turned to flee, but Jeffrey had not been behind him in using his eyes. His hand fell heavily on the boy's shoulder, and though the latter made a desperate attempt he failed to break that hold.

"So it's you!" cried the Spider.

Phil settled down, thrust his hands in his pockets, and coolly replied:

"Assooreedly."

"By George! this 'ere is big luck!" Jeffrey added.

"Thar's sometimes a dif'rence o' opinion, my b'loved contemporary, don't yer know?"

"I've got ye ag'in."

"Arnd ye p'int ter yer record with pride, I presom."

"Curse ye, you young scoundrel! don't ye fling that in my face ag'in. I'd like ter know where Abe Adkins an' the woman is."

"Would ye?"

"Yes, I would."

"Wouldn't ye like ter own Maud S., or the Erie Railroad, or some other trifle?"

"Oh! I've been a-hankerin' ter git hold o' you, an' now that I hev—"

"Curb yer hanker, J. Jeffrey. It's a pestiferous thing, same ez measles be, when it gits a-ragin'."

The Spider gave his prisoner a rough shaking.

"I'll tar ye all ter pieces, ef ye give me any more o' yer lip!" he declared. "You an' me has got ter have a settlement. You run ag'in' a bad man when you helped Abe Adkins give me the slip, an' I'll make you the sickest rat in New York ef you don't come down off yer stilts. Tell me where they be!"

"I don't know where they be, arnd I wouldn't tell you ef I did."

"I'll either make you talk, or lay you out," said the Spider, doggedly, "Where be they?"

He transferred one hand to Phil's throat, and put a pressure upon it which was far from com-

fortable. The Pavement Prince had been prolonging the conversation with the hope that some honest person would arrive, but no one appeared in the small, insignificant street.

Plainly, he must depend upon himself.

It is not the fashion of Five Points boys to tamely accept ill-treatment from any one, and Phil, though the soul of honor, was an agile, muscular boy who was afraid of no one.

As the Spider choked him he managed to speak in his usual cool way.

"Say, don't do that!"

"Why not?"

"It don't feel good, arnd you're liable ter git into trouble. Things might happen *this way!*"

Jeffrey had relaxed his hold somewhat, hoping that Phil was about to weaken, but at the last words the boy swept one of his feet around quickly, catching Jack on the ankles, and the ruffian's feet went out from under him like a flash.

He fell heavily to the sidewalk, and before he could regain his feet, the imp of Paradise Park was running rapidly down the street.

The boy turned his head, waved his hand and called out in a clear voice:

"I p'int with pride ter my record!"

A furious exclamation fell from the Spider's lips, and he dashed through the street in rapid pursuit.

The fugitive had little fear now. A heavy man of middle age has little chance in a race with an agile lad of sixteen, and Phil knew it.

Phil was drawing away from his pursuer in good style, when the portly form and brass buttons of a patrolman loomed up not far ahead.

"Hello! that changes the case!" thought the boy. "Maybe Mister Jeffrey will keep it up now."

The Spider did keep it up, and he did more. He, too, saw the policeman, and his wits were quick enough for the emergency. Suddenly his heavy voice broke the silence:

"Stop, thief! Stop him, officer! He's snatched a lady's watch an' run. Stop, thief!"

The whole aspect of the case suddenly changed, and Five Points Phil saw the tide going against him. Policemen are not fond of boys, anyhow, as they make a good deal of mischief, and now that the brand of thief had been attached to him, the Pavement Prince knew that all his explanations would avail nothing.

Just then he was between the two men, and the big patrolman was bracing up for the emergency, but Phil saw one way of gaining a reprieve, if not to escape. On his left was a space clear of large buildings, and which seemed to be a coal-yard. It was separated from the street by a fence, but it was an ancient, broken-down affair, and no gate blocked the drive-way.

Without a moment's hesitation Phil darted into this yard.

Once beyond the street the darkness seemed intense, but this was all the more to his taste. His intention was to hide, and all things seemed favorable.

The yard was filled with empty carts and shanties, and he promptly made for the loneliest corner, and concealed himself behind one of the latter. He heard the two men enter the yard, and they came straight toward where he was.

"Who is the young scoundrel?" asked the patrolman.

"Don't know his name," the Spider replied.

"Snatched a lady's watch, you say?"

"Yes; a good one."

"Were you with her?"

"Great Scott, no. She wa'n't my kind. She was a 'ristercrat, an' I'm only a poor man, but I'm honist."

"Well, we'll have him in the lock-up inside an hour. He must be right in there. You go one way, and I'll go the other, so we can surround him."

"Zactly. Look out that the desp'r villain don't do ye harm."

"I'll break his head if he tries it. Go on, now!"

All this was of painful interest to Phil. They had, indeed, cornered him, and it remained to be seen whether they would scoop in their prey. Phil surveyed the scene carefully, and then mounted to the top of the shanty. As they came around, one on each side, he proposed to drop off the front and dodge them.

But as he went up he had an unpleasant surprise. The shanty was only a deserted ruin, and had no roof. He acted quickly, and leaped to the next shanty. On one side of this a four-story building rose, but he hoped to find a place where he could drop from the shanty and be outside the yard entirely.

Again he was disappointed. There was no such chance, and the two men were advancing.

clambering slowly over piles of rubbish. When they came around he was pretty sure to be discovered.

What could he do?

He caught sight of the fire-escape on the side of the large building, and had a new idea. He would mount to the roof, pass on over the next houses, and thus escape.

It was really his only chance, and he caught hold of the iron ladder and began to go up rapidly. Up, up he went, nor did he stop as he heard his enemies below. If he could only gain the roof—

Suddenly he stopped short. The fire-escape ended abruptly at a window, and the roof was six feet above. The intervening space was all of smooth bricks. Then a voice arose below:

"There the little villain is—up the fire-escape!"

It was the policeman who spoke; Phil was hopelessly cornered at last!

CHAPTER XII.

MISSING MINOLA.

A CARRIAGE turned from Broadway down Worth street, and went on to the Five Points. The driver stopped in front of the House of Industry, descended and opened the cab-door. A lady alighted. She was young, passably good-looking, passably well-dressed—an average woman.

"This is the place," said the driver.

The visitor entered a basement, where she was met by a man. She promptly stated her business.

"I am a stranger, and would like to look over the House of Industry. I understand that it is allowed."

"Certainly," he answered, "visitors are welcome. Go up the stairs to the office."

She obeyed. On the way she stole a look at a photograph she carried—the pictured face of a child who looked remarkably like Minola Day. Then she concealed the photograph.

Ascending to the next floor she found herself in a plain, good-sized room. Here the general business of the institution was transacted, the superintendent's room being partitioned off at one corner, with an abundance of glass. In the main room were waiting various poor persons—parents and friends of children who were inmates of the House of Industry.

The visitor made known her errand as below. She was a stranger, and would like to see the place. She was assured that he was welcome. A boy usher was detailed to guide her, and away they went. Ascending a few steps, they passed through a door and were at the rear of the chapel.

It was a quaint place, plain except for the fancy windows, but interesting when one was told how, of Sundays, three hundred children sat at the front and sung as only children can—yet the visitor scarcely saw or heard.

There were no children there—she was soon satisfied.

"The play-room is a great place," said the boy conductor, looking up at her.

"Take me there!" she exclaimed, quickly.

It was a long journey, and always up—up. But the last stair was climbed at last, and she was ushered into what her guide thought paradise—the play-room. A large room, with children romping to their heart's content; a wonderful room for those waifs who had lived in human hives and had no play-ground but the streets.

Here the visitor paused, and began a careful study of faces. The boys she ignored; her attention was all on the girls. At last she turned to her guide, and disappointment was in her voice as she asked:

"Is this all?"

"All! Not much! You've only begun."

"Then let us go on."

They went down once more—down to the boys' sleeping-room. Another wonderful sight; scores of small beds arranged in row after row, white and clean, and so numerous that the eye would grow weary in counting all the big room held. But there were no children there, and the visitor's interest was not marked.

Again they went on. She saw the printing-office; the huge dining-room; the remarkable arrangements for ablutions; and so on through the list. And, last of all, she was led where she would long before have gone only for her guide's zeal to show the play-room.

The school-room, with its connecting classrooms. Here were children in abundance, and of almost every nationality under the sun.

It was a wonder of physiognomy one might study for hours, but the visitor's gaze passed

quickly from face to face. She was looking for a girl who was the original of the photograph—she cared nothing for the others.

She saw them all, yet, as she turned to leave one of the most remarkable and praiseworthy institutions of New York, she was greatly disappointed. She had failed to find what she came to seek.

She passed out on the street, gave an order to the waiting driver, entered the cab and was driven away. It was a long ride. When she paused, it was on Hudson street. She dismissed the cab, rung a door-bell, and was soon in one of the modest brick houses of that far-reaching street.

There she was met by a man and woman well known to the reader. They were Robert Carey, alias "Abe Adkins," and Mrs. Alden.

"Well," eagerly cried Carey, "what luck?"

"I have been to the House of Industry, but failed to find any one who looked like the photograph."

Carey's face grew downcast.

"Poor Minola!" he murmured.

"I saw girls by the score—not less than one hundred and fifty, I should say—and some were beautiful and refined, but I could find no one who looked like Minola. I deeply regretted that you had told me to make no inquiries."

"I dared not have you. They may be on the watch for me, and inquiry for her might bring ruin to her and me. Yet, it may be I was foolish. Unless they have received notice to watch for me, an inquiry would have made no impression on their minds."

"Are you sure Minola was really placed in the House of Industry?"

"That's what my last night's letter said. Her lost friend seem'd gone, and the asylum of the poor was opened to her."

"Well, you're no wiser for my visit."

"No."

"Let me give you a word of advice."

"What is it?"

"You are now situated so that you can take care of Minola, and you want her. You don't know what dangers are hovering over her head. Why not make a bold attempt to regain her? Send some one to the House of Industry to make direct inquiry. If she is gone, you want to know where she is. She may be in the hands of an enemy."

"I believe your advice is good," replied Carey after a short pause, "but who can I send? You can't go again, and Mrs. Alder and I ought not to venture out."

"Send Mrs. Haight."

This was the landlady; and a woman they had befriended in their better days. The suggestion was so reasonable that it was first discussed, and then adopted. Mrs. Haight readily consented to visit the House of Industry, and she took a car and started on her journey.

When she returned her face bore a troubled expression.

"What is it?" Carey quickly asked.

"I've had an experience since I went away," was the emphatic reply; and Mrs. Haight, a muscular woman with a strong will, gave her head a sharp nod.

"Have you tidings of Minola?"

"I have, but I hate to tell them. I shall arouse your fears terribly, for there is a chance to suspect a good deal."

"Go on!" said Carey, in a tremulous voice.

"Well, I went to the House of Industry and inquired for Minola Day. There had been such a girl there, but she was taken away Thursday, by the man who put her there."

"Who was that?"

"His name was Black—Sim Black."

"Who is he?"

"He claimed to be a relative, and he put the girl there, when the family with whom she was living moved away, claiming to be very poor—which the asylum people found to be so—but when he came to take her out, stating that he had become able to support her, of course she was promptly released."

"Did you learn where he lived?"

"Yes; and I went there."

"Ah! With what result?"

"I found neither Minola nor Black. The girl had not been there, and Black had not been seen since he took her out."

"What is the character of this man?" quickly asked Carey, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"I asked several, including a policeman, and what they said would lead one to suppose he was tolerably honest, as men go around the Five Points, but one pale-faced woman told me in a hushed voice, with many a nervous glance

to see that she was not overheard, that he was a man who would do any dark deed."

"And now he has spirited Minola away, with some evil purpose in view."

"I really fear so."

"May Heaven watch over the friendless, helpless child!" murmured Carey, while tears ran down his cheeks. "Why must she suffer, too? She is in the hands of wretches who—But she must, she shall be rescued. I will put someone on the track at once. But whom can I send? Ha! I have it! Who, indeed, but Five Points Phil? The very person; we will send for him at once!"

CHAPTER XIII.

PHIL TAKES THE CASE.

FIVE POINTS PHIL heard the exclamation of the policeman with considerable alarm. There he hung in mid-air on the fire-escape, unable to get higher, and the men had their eyes upon him, and would soon have their hands on him, too. They had only to ascend the fire-escape and pluck him like fruit, as it were.

He was in a bad fix.

"I'll go up an' git him," said the Spider, eagerly, and an idea flashed upon him that, as Phil might yet make trouble for him, he would manage to throw the boy off the ladder, in which case the fall might kill him.

The officer did not object, and Jack started up the fire-escape.

The Pavement Prince was reluctant to yield, but he feared that trouble would result from a fight. Possibly he might keep Jeffrey off, but he would be arrested in the end. Oh! if he could only reach the roof!

Suddenly he had another idea, and laid hold of the window. A single effort was enough to show that it was not fastened; it went up easily, and a dark room was revealed beyond.

"It's a burglarious job," he muttered, "but I'm goin' in thar. Anything ter beat a pestiferous chapp like the Spider. Assooreddy!"

And he crawled through.

There proved to be a catch on the window, and he fastened it quickly. Then he began to retreat. Slowly he moved along, but, even at that, collided with something forcibly.

Just then he heard Jeffrey at the window, but he had made a discovery which turned his thoughts elsewhere.

"A lardder!" he thought, feeling of the object against which he had run. "Now I never seen a lardder like that 'ceptin' one that led up to a scuttle. Assooreddy! Great ginger! ef that's what 'tis, I may beat 'em yet."

He ascended promptly, and found his theory confirmed. The ladder did lead to a scuttle, and when he had unhooked it, he easily raised the door. Then his head appeared above the roof.

All was clear there, and he promptly ascended.

A row of flat-topped houses stretched away beyond him, and his hopes rose high. If he could get down at some desirable point, he would be all right. He hurried along, each step taking him further from his enemies.

When he reached the sixth house he found it one only partially finished. The roof had not been placed, and it looked somewhat like a skeleton.

"This ere is rich!" he said, aloud. "I kin go down like a fly—the only danger is that some pestiferous watchman is on the premises, arnd will merlet me. But thar's no time ter lose; Jack arnd the policeman will be comin' this way, arnd I've got ter scoot!"

Acting on this idea he made such good use of his time that, in less than three minutes, he was on the lower floor. No watchman was visible, and he went to the sidewalk.

"Clear coast! Wal, this is sorter salcohrus, arnd I willgit out o' this ward like a rabbit arter a hoss-fly. I don't want ter see the Spider ag'in, much. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things."

And he beat a retreat with all possible celerity, moving so as to avoid his pursuers. He was quite successful, and as every step took him nearer to Solomon Richmore's, his spirits arose a good deal. He reached Houston street without adventure.

He was still hurrying along when he met a big man who did not deign to glance at him. I'll, however, used his eyes, and he made a discovery. The man was Ruger, the leader of the party who had arrested "Abe Adkins," and then allowed him to escape through the treachery of his subordinate.

The Five Points boy halted and gazed after the unsuspecting officer.

"Now, what be you doin' on my street?" he muttered. "Looks suspicious. I smell smoke, so ter speak. You pestiferous critter, hev you got enter my track? Mebbe so, but ef you don't keep orff, I'll hev the law o' you. No introoders ain't wanted!"

Phil resumed his way, his mind filled with wondering speculations in regard to Ruger. Then the night visitors to Richmore's house came in for a share of attention. Who had they been, and why had they visited Richmore's? Could it be Mrs. George was a traitress, and had admitted burglars?

"Ef that's a hue arnd cry, ter-morrer, I shall know whose head ter hit. Don't seem possble that Mrs. G. Wash George is a culprit, but piles o' folks will go fur plunder when the ship begins ter sink. We'll see!"

Regaining his room without detection, Phil went to bed and to sleep. Another day dawned, wore away, and nobody hinted at burglary. Richmore and Mrs. George were as usual, and all seemed serene.

"Tain't my place ter run ag'in' the house-keeper," thought Phil, "arnd I'll hide my head arnd never whistle. She's an old savynt, arnd must be straight. Yet a marn may smile arnd be a villain still, arnd a woman always smiles when she's meditatin' mischief, arnd doin' it."

He rested easy until he received a postal card from "Adkins," asking him to call as soon as dark, if possible.

Once more he applied to Mrs. George for leave of absence, received it, and went to Hudson street. Carey and Mrs. Alden welcomed him cordially.

"I received a postal keerd—which you was reckless ter send—arnd hev come. What's the uproar?"

Carey promptly told him of the efforts made during the day to find Minola Day, and the results of these efforts. Phil grew interested. He had known Minola quite well at one time, and the sudden call for her surprised him. He looked earnestly at Carey.

"Permit me ter ax what yer warnt o' the small girl. What's she ter you, anyhow?"

Tremulously Carey replied:

"She is my daughter!"

"You don't say so! Why, I knowed Minola—Your da'rter! Great ginger! this is pecooliar, but fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

"I have no time to enter into details, but will briefly say that my misfortunes separated me from my child; she drifted away and was lost to my sight; and I have only recently regained trace of her. And now, just as I have located her, she has disappeared strangely, suspiciously."

"You argue that an enemy tuk her from the House o' Industry, eh?"

"Yes."

"Wal, Abe—I mean Rob; I forget yer name was Carey—I hev an idee. Arlfred Starford hez been axin' me, could I find Minola Day."

Carey bounded to his feet.

"That scoundrel has abducted her!" he exclaimed.

"Jes' ez like ez not, Rob, arnd this is the way I figger it. This Sim Black is a frien' o' Jeffrey, the Spider, arnd you know Starford arnd Grimes had an intervoo with Jeffrey—"

"Why didn't I think of this before? I saw two young men come to see Jeffrey, when I was there, and thought that one looked as Alfred might look after the lapse of years; and I remember now that they and he spoke of some friendless girl. I caught no names, and took but little notice, anyway, for I was in great dread of arrest, but I did give time to pity the child, who was said to be friendless. I thought of my child. Now, I believe it was Minola of whom they spoke; that they came there to have him spirit her away; and that he has done the deed."

"Quite joodically put, assooreddy; but I warnt ter offer an amendment. Do yer recollect that the Spider objected ter your leavin' his palatial castle 'cause he would therby lose a boddle?"

"Yes."

"And he said he wanted ter fill his pocket, eh?"

"Yes."

"Item two is, Alfred arnd Luke come straight ter me arter leavin' the Spider, arnd axed me ef I knew whar Minola was. Natooral inf'rence, ther Spider lied ter them, arnd said he didn't know. W'ot d'ye make o' that?"

"Maybe he didn't know, then," Carey suggested.

"Arnd mebbe he did. A marn may smile, arnd be a villain still. Strikes me thart J. Jeffrey is runnin' a game on his own hook, with Sim Block ez a pal. D'ye s'pose Arlfred arnd

Luke knewed you was at Jack's, when they called?"

"By George, no! You are arguing to some purpose."

"Yes, sirree, I b'lieve the pestiferous Spider is engineerin' a case o' his own. Don't be afeered o' his doin' actooal harm ter Minola, fur it's boddle—ransom, prob'ly—that he wants, but git her away ez soon as possible."

"We don't even know where she is."

Phil closed one eye, and meditated for a moment.

"I'm ther hoss-fly ter find out!" he then said, abruptly.

"Will you try?" cried Carey, in delight.

"Try! I'll succeed."

"Do it, my boy, and I will bless you; it was for this I called you here. Do it, and I will pay—"

"Now don't injoor my tender feelin's. Minola is an old frien' o' mine; I knowed her when we was mere children. Arnd now I'm goin' ter find her. Assooreddy!"

Up sprung the Pavement Prince and, clapping on his hat, started for the door. Carey delayed him a few minutes with advice and caution, but the boy was soon *en route* for the Five Points. He reached Paradise Park shortly after dark, and paused there to look at the House of Industry.

"I'd jest admire ter git my hands onto the pestiferous abductors!" he thought. "I'd walk all over their collars, arnd mash them out o' shape arnd—Hello! I reckon I'm in fur it!"

The abrupt change of his thoughts was natural. For three rods away he had seen Jack Jeffrey, and that person was coming directly toward him!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PAVEMENT PRINCE INVESTIGATES.

The appearance of Jeffrey did not as yet threaten danger, for he had not seen Phil, and the latter dodged back into a doorway without loss of time. Jeffrey was just the man he wanted to see, and if he could avoid discovery some good might come of it.

Evidently the Spider had no thought of the boy just then, for he was making good time along the sidewalk. He glanced at the House of Industry as he passed, and then continued his rapid journey.

He went on until he reached Mulberry street, and then turned to the left. Not once did he look behind him, but he might have done so to advantage. Five Points Phil was following like a sleuth-hound.

On went Jack for several blocks, and then he paused before a rickety house and took his first cautious look around. Phil was not visible. He had stepped into a recess, and was concealed from view. Jack rung the bell twice; the door opened; he entered. Then Phil stepped into view again.

"Hived easy," he observed. "I've got the hive in my eye, so ter speak, arnd now it remains ter see what sort o' an ark this is. Looks rusty, dusty and musty, but I can't say what it's like. How be I goin' ter find out?"

This seemed likely to be a poser, for he did not want to betray himself by asking questions of any of the loungers, and a policeman was not likely to pay much attention to him. He surveyed the front of the building critically for some time, and then decided to enter the alley which extended along one side and see if he could get a view of the rear.

The alley was narrow, strong-scented and far from clean, but Phil went on as philosophically as ever.

Once past the corner of the house the whole yard was open to him—a wretched place, filled with rubbish of various kinds. But it commanded the desired view of the house.

One thing at once impressed Phil as peculiar. Curtains at the window did not seem to be in vogue there, and what few were to be seen were of very simple nature; a newspaper in some cases being the style. But one window was different from the rest.

It was entirely dark, except for horizontal bars of light which extended along it. At first he believed that several pieces of cloth had been utilized, but the obstructions seemed too thick for that.

"A boarded-up winder woul' look jest that wav," he muttered. "Now, wharfore should they board it up? Why, unless they hev got a pris'ner in thar?"

The theory seemed to be "full of meat," as he expressed it.

He stood for a long time, his brows knit and his hands plunged deep into his pockets.

While he stood thus a man came out of one of

the rear doors to the yard. Phil promptly advanced and accosted him in a free-and-easy way.

"Evenin', my b'loved contemporary."

"Good-a evening," was the reply, in an unmistakable Italian dialect.

"How is everything?"

"All is well-a."

"Jes' so. That's saloobr'us. Say, don't I know ye? What might be your name?"

"Nicolò Gizetti."

"Sart'in it is; I've seen ye afore."

"So have I seen-a you. You-a are Phil."

"Right ye be. Wal, now, this is a joyful meet. My heart re'eiy overflows at sight o' you."

Phil knew Nicolo to be a rascal, but he did not object in talking so flatteringly to him. He let the conversation run on commonplace matters for awhile, and then approached a more important subject.

"I s'pose you live here, Nicolo?"

"Yes."

"Jolly place?"

"Well-a, yes. We drink-a, dance-a, fight-a. Have pretty good-a time."

"I should ree-mark! Who lives up whar that winder is boarded up?"

"Ah! don't ask-a me that. I never talk-a about my neighbors, you know."

Phil produced a bright silver dollar from his pocket.

"Nicolo, do you perceive that radiant medallion?"

"Yes."

"Wal, I will give it to you, ef you will tell me who's shet up in that room?"

"Hist! not so loud-a," replied the Italian, his eyes glistening at sight of the dollar. "Somebody might hear ye. It's only a girl-a."

"That all? What's her name?"

"He call-a her Vinola."

"He? Who is that?"

"Jack-a Jeffrey, the Spider."

"Jes' so! Arnd he's got a girl named Minola shut up thar, has he?"

"Yes, but don't you give-a me away."

"Not a 'give-a.' But, Nicolo, I warnt ter git that female girl out. She's my ward; her parients died young, arnd she'd be an orphan only fur me. I'm her uncle by marriage, on her step-father's side, d'ye see?"

Nicolo, who prided himself on his knowledge of the English language, promptly replied that he did see, though his swarthy face bore a somewhat puzzled expression.

Five Points Phil had broken the ice, and he continued the attack skillfully.

He flashed the bright dollar in the light, and argued well. One dollar was not a heavy bribe, but it was all he could offer, and it would go a long ways with a man like Nicolo. He eyed it covetously, weakened, and finally agreed to help Phil all he could.

He was frank enough to say that he did not believe they could get Minola away, but they could certainly investigate, and if a chance was offered, seize it.

They entered the house together. The only use of caution then necessary was to avoid the Spider; the mere presence of Phil there, in Nicolo's company, would excite no comment from others. So they went in freely, and began to ascend narrow stairs, each individual step of which tilted at some angle peculiar to itself.

The old house was not a safe place for any one, and Phil was well aware that, leaving Jeffrey entirely out of the question, he was going among men who would gladly assault him to get his dollar, doing their work without a compunction as to whether he came out of it with life left in him or not. Nicolo might do this, himself.

Yet, the bold Five Points boy went in as coolly as ever.

They were soon on the same floor where the room with the boarded windows was, and were moving through the hall, which was only lighted by an occasional open door and the light which came out at such points, when Nicolo suddenly caught Phil's arm and drew him back to the darkest corner.

"Hist!" he said, warningly.

Phil stood still. A man and woman were advancing, and the boy recognized Jack Jeffrey at once. Phil almost held his breath, but the danger was soon over. The man and woman passed on, and entered a room not far away.

"He has-a hunted up-a Mother Kreig," said Nicolo. "She have-a charge of the girl-a."

"Which door is the prison?"

Nicolo indicated.

"Can we git in?"

"Mother Kreig, she probably got-a the key."

"Assooreddy! Wal, we must get it, somehow."

Nicolo shook his head.

"We can't git-a it whi'e the Spider, he-a stay here."

"Guess you're right. Say, s'posen I go ter your room, arnd lay low until the Spider goes?"

"All right-a. Come with me."

Phil obeyed, and they went to Nicolo's room. The Italian had become thoroughly in earnest, and they discussed the matter in all its bearings. Nicolo stated that Mother Kreig was a heavy drinker; that she was half-stupid nearly all the time; and that, when left alone, she had a habit of falling asleep in her chair.

Upon this fact he based his hopes. If Jeffrey soon went away, and the old woman fell asleep, he would go in, try to secure the coveted key, and then release Minola.

"A right up-arnd-down gelorous scheme!" said Phil.

"You sure you give-a me the dollar?"

"You bet! I ain't the sort o' a pestiferous viper who smiles arnd is a villain still. Yes, sirree; you shall have the dollar, straight ez a string."

Then they settled down to await further developments, but, luckily, were not kept in inaction a great while. Jack came out of Mother Kreig's room without having gone near Minola's prison, and then went down the creaking stairs.

This was very favorable, and if the woman would kindly fall asleep, there would be some hope. After the lapse of five minutes Nicolo crept to her door, which was open, and looked in. He returned to Phil with a hopeful expression on his dark face.

"She almost sleep-a," he reported. "We wait-a a little longer, and then go-a and make-a the trial."

"All right, but I'll do the pocket-pickin'."

They waited accordingly, and, when a few minutes had passed, again reconnoitered. Mother Kreig seemed sound asleep in her chair. Everything was favorable for the attempt, but its success was not so well assured. She might awake while search was being made for the key, arouse the whole house and get them both arrested.

Nicolo remained by the door, while Phil glided forward, his steps almost as noiseless as those of a cat, every sense on the alert.

He reached the woman, and spoke her name, softly. It was a test, but she did not stir.

Then he crouched down, and his hand was carefully insinuated into her pocket. He watched her face narrowly, keenly on the alert for the first sign of danger.

Nicolo watched with intense anxiety. Would Phil succeed? The suspense was painful.

Phil's hand disappeared—seemed to remain motionless—glided out as cautiously as before—and a big, brass key glittered in his hand. Nicolo's eyes brightened. The victory already was half won! Phil retreated backward, slowly, cautiously, his gaze still fixed on Mother Kreig's face; but the woman slept on, and the resolute lad reached the door in safety.

"Now, we work-a-fast," Nicolo said. "Open girl's door—git-a her away. If-a we get caught we as-a good as dead men. You see?"

"Assooreddy! Come on!"

Phil's spirits were rising, and he grasped the key tighter and hastened to the prison door. Carefully he turned back the bolt; the door opened at his touch; he passed inside and stood in a lighted room.

"There, too, was Minola. She had started up from a chair with a frightened expression, but it vanished at sight of the foremost visitor. She ran forward to the Pavement Prince, her face full of hope.

"Phil!" she exclaimed joyfully, "are you here? Oh! won't you take me away—"

"Assooreddy, I will—jest what I'm hyar fur. Now you sling on yer hat, eat settary, arnd we will slide out. Thar ain't a momunt ter lose; the enemy is 'round hyar ez thick ez hair on a yaller dog's back, arnd they're pestiferous critters. Gimme yer hand; now come oa!"

He had remembered Nicolo and passed over the dollar, much to that person's satisfaction, and the flight was at once begun. Minola did not care to ask questions; her great desire was to escape from that dreadful house.

"I go with-a you to lower door," observed Nicolo.

And the three went on together, but they were only half-way down the first flight of stairs when a man appeared in the semi-darkness and began to ascend. Phil suddenly stopped. The man was Jack Jeffrey, and it seemed impossible to avoid meeting him face to face. Discovery, in that case, was certain.

CHAPTER XV.

DARK WORK MARKED OUT FOR PHIL.

It was a startling situation. For some reason Jeffrey had returned, and he could not pass the trio on the stairs without recognizing Phil and Minola. If he did recognize them, escape would be impossible; the whole house would be aroused and would turn against them.

Nicolo saw the danger and, Italian-like, whipped out a slender knife, but the danger was providentially averted. A voice in the second hall called Jeffrey's name; he answered; the unseen spoke again; and then Jack turned, descended the few stairs he had passed up, and went away into the dark hall.

"Go!" almost hissed Nicolo. "We no get-a such a chance again—we go fast!"

And they did go fast. They ran quickly, yet lightly, down the stairs, and then to the lower flight. Every moment they expected to hear the Spider's voice behind them, but they were saved from this. The lower floor was soon reached, and Nicolo opened the outside door.

"You best run-a fast!" he said.

"Assooreddy, my b'loved frien',?" answered Phil serenely. "Come on, Minola, and let us survey the classic presepts o' Mulberry street. Strikes me the place is improvin'. I never seen it look so pleasant afore. Fact is, we've been in the lion's jaws, arnd I feel happy ez a June flea that we ain't got our heads crunched. Assooreddy!"

"Oh, Phil! I have had a terrible time," said the girl, in an unsteady voice.

"Don't doubt it in the least. Mr. J. Jeffrey is a pestiferous critter; that's what he is."

"He's terrible!" replied Minola, with a shiver. "Where are we going now? Oh! take me back to the House of Industry; they were kind to me there, and will protect me. They're my only friends."

"They was, but they ain't no longer so. Minola, yer dark days are erbout past, I hope, arnd the sun is sorter risin'; leastways, I hope it'll rise. Thar are frien's o' yourn who are frien's, who warnt ter see ye—I go bail that they are honest. None o' the Jeffrey or Black stripe."

Minola was not at once convinced, for her past experience had alarmed her, but Phil, without making any actual revelation, satisfied her that all would be well.

Robert Carey's new quarters were reached without further adventure, and Phil had the pleasure of taking Minola to her father. It was an affecting meeting, which need not be described in detail, and great was the wonder of Minola when she learned that she actually had a father. It was not in her gentle nature to blame any one who was kind to her, but, even had she felt that way, Carey furnished good proof that he had done his best.

As for Phil, Carey could not find words enough with which to thank him for rescuing the girl, but he made his gratitude known in a way quite satisfactory.

The Pavement Prince left the house, feeling that Minola was safe as long as no harm befell her father, and it was a source of no small consolation to him. He went back to Richmore's in a contented frame of mind.

He met Alfred Stafford at the door, as the latter was just leaving the house.

"Hallo, Phil! Where've you been?"

"Out fur a ramble, as 'twere."

"I want to see you. Come to Luke Grimes's room—it's only a few blocks away."

"Assooreddy."

Phil answered promptly, but he scented something wrong at once. An interview in Luke's room did not herald anything honorable, he thought, but it pleased him well. He had entered the game to penetrate the conspirators' scheme and foil them, and was willing to hear all they had to say.

They were soon in the room, where Grimes sat smoking a remarkably long-stemmed pipe, with a big whisky bottle at his elbow. Phil was given a seat and invited to drink, but he declined.

Then Alfred opened the conversation.

"Phil, you have always told me you were a bold young fellow, without a conscience."

"I onc't tol' ye scroopes was like boils—onc'nec'sary, arnd disagreeable ter hev."

"Just so. Well, who secured you a place at Sol Richmore's?"

"You arnd yer princely pard hyar."

"Who do you consider your actual employer?"

"You arnd Grimsey, sure."

"Are you willing to obey us?"

"Arlfred, I'm a cautious chap, arnd I don't hanker ter go ter the Island, nur Sing Sing, but I kin take a tolerably safe resk, ef it's lined with goold arnd silver."

So saying, Phil closed one eye and nodded his head violently, whereupon both men laughed aloud. They thought they had secured a willing, unscrupulous tool.

"You're a brick, Phil, and we will load you with money, so that when you grow up you can be a 'blood.'

"Arnd be a politician in the Sixth Ward?" cried the boy, with a show of great eagerness.

"Yes."

"Then I'm your r'arn!"

The plotters exchanged a significant glance.

"Well, Phil, you know my Uncle Sol is a queer man."

"Assooreddy."

"Now, he's ill, but we believe that, with due care, he might fully recover and live ten years. Unfortunately, he is obstinate, and though I have found a good doctor who asserts that he can cure him, the old man will not take the necessary medicine."

"Mighty obstinate, ain't he?"

"He surely is. Now, if he could take this medicine, unknown to him, what a blessing it would be!"

"Now you're talkin'."

"Phil, if we give you a powder, can you drop it into Richmore's present medicine, unknown to him, and so save the poor old fellow?"

"Easy as rollin' off a log."

"And you will do it?"

"Assooreddy."

For some time longer the conspirators talked, sounding and studying Phil with what they thought great astuteness, and then Alfred produced the powder and gave it to the boy. The former's face was very grave, and it was clear that he was not at ease, but Phil's manner was serene, and he promised to do everything in proper style.

He left the house, bearing the powder, and returned to Richmore's. Once in his room he placed the package on the table.

"Lay thar, ye pestiferous thing!" he said, with his head cocked on one side and his arms akimbo. "Lay thar, arnd lemme look at ye. Sweet-smellin' daffy-dil o' the valley, you be! Concentrated essence o' death, murder arnd diabolical devastation, ain't ye? So Arlfred warnts ye fed ter Solomon, does he? arnd I'm ter be the feeder? Well, I guess not. If I should do that Sol would shuffle off the mortal coil, arnd Arlfred would get the boodle. Ef the deed was discovered, who would suffer? Why, Five Points Phil! Arlfred ain't all fool, nor am I. Ef Arlfred gits the best o' me, he kin make a note on't. I'll save myself, arnd I'll save Solomon. I consider myself that gent's lawful guardian—he must be saved!"

The boy refolded the paper, put it carefully away, and went to bed.

Early in the morning he went unannounced to Richmore's room. The old man lay on the bed as usual, and his grim face looked paler than Phil had ever seen it before, leading him to believe that the powder would not be required to carry the miser out of the world.

"Well, so you're here!" Richmore commented.

"Has Mrs. George sent you?"

"Assooreddy not; I come myself."

"What is it? Is there some extravagance to report—some heedless waste of what cost money?"

"It might be put in that way, I s'pose. D'y'e see this 'ere powder?"

"Yes."

"It prob'lly cost money—wealth. Arnd it's ter be threwwed away, d'y'e see?"

"Explain!"

"Arlfred Starfford gi'n me this, arnd tol' me ter feed it to you."

"To me? For what reason?"

Richmore was looking at the powder, but, to save his life, Phil could not have told what was in the old man's mind; his face was wholly unreadable.

"Wa-al," hesitatingly answered the boy, "he said it was a medicine he had got from a great doctor, which was sure ter cure ye o' all yer infirmities, but I was ter feed it to yer on the sly—drop it in yer other medicine, arnd keep mum. He said 'twould cure ye, whether or no, arnd he had an awful tender feelin' fur yer."

"Instead of which, you brought it to me?"

"Yes."

"I will keep it. I hardly approve of Alfred's course, but now he has bought the medicine, and paid for it, of course I will take it, so it need not be wasted."

"Solomon, ef I was you, I wouldn't do it."

"Why not?"

"What ef the stuff is a pestiferous pison?"

"Boy," severely exclaimed Richmore, "do

you suppose Alfred would be so base as to poison me?"

"Assooreddy, I do. He's perlite ter you, but why? He warnts yer money, arnd now the will's made in his favor, he warnts ter feed ye on secret powders. Looks bad!"

"You are wronging an estimable young man, and I cannot listen to you. Still, I thank you for what you have done; I thank you heartily. You shall receive five cents more than your regular pay this week, for being true to your employer. Leave the powder. I will not have it wasted; probably it cost a dollar. Shocking extravagance! Yes, I will take it, and it will be very pleasant for Alfred if it cures me of my ills."

CHAPTER XVI.

AGAIN IN THE SPIDER'S WEB!

FIVE POINTS PHIL scratched his head in a disconsolate way. He felt quite sure that the powder was a deadly poison which would kill Richmore soon after he took it; yet the old man, suspicious of every one else, was so infatuated with Alfred Stafford that he would leave all common sense out of the question, and risk his life just because money had been paid for the article.

"Ye-es, Arlfred will be awfully tickled ef ye eat the stuff, but I would not put it down my throat of ye'd will me Washington Square ez a reward. That's p'ison in it, arnd I know it!"

"Nonsense! Now we will drop the subject. I have news for you. To-morrow, Luke Grimes and Clara Vere Stafford are to be married in this room."

"Great ginger! that so?"

"Yes."

"Pecooliarly fit match, I should say."

"It is at my request. I am near my end, and I want to see all my true friends happy before I go. Clara Vere is a sweet dove—I can see that, if I am a worthless, worn-out old man—and Luke is a chivalrous young man; one of a class too rare by far for the good of the world. Yes, the event will take place here, and it will serve to lighten the gloom of my life."

Five Points Phil listened in great disgust. It was too much for his composure to see how utterly the old man was in the power of the conspirators.

"It will be a tetchin' a'fair," he observed, dryly.

"I want you to be present."

"Ez first bride's-maid?"

"Boy!" sternly exclaimed Richmore.

"Excuse me, ef I'm brash. Wal, I'll be 'round."

"Now you can leave me."

"Solomon, one word. Ef you're wise, you'll give that thar powder ter a chemist arnd hev it analyzed. Ef you don't, you may never see the union o' the sweet dove arnd the gallant gallus feller, ter-morrer. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

"Enough! Go, boy!"

And out went Phil, with some anger visible in his movements.

"Blind ez a bat, he is! Why didn't I take the powder ter a magistrate, or some other sane man, not trust ter a feller who's lost his mind? Solomon is bound ter get laid out by them pestiferous schemers!"

This thought troubled him a good deal, and additional thought on the subject added to his fears until he decided that, after the close of the day, he would go to a police justice whom he knew slightly, and lay the case before him.

The afternoon was half gone when Phil found more trouble to worry him. A messenger boy arrived, bearing a note, and when the Pavement Prince opened it he read as follows:

"PHL:—Come here at once! There is need of your advice and help; a sore affliction has befallen us.
Mrs. HAIGHT."

"Great ginger!" Phil exclaimed.

Mrs. Haight was the landlady of the Careys, and Phil argued the worst from this summons. On this occasion Phil did not trouble himself to ask leave of absence—he simply went. It was not a long journey to Hudson street, and he was soon there and in the presence of Mrs. Haight. Her face was grave, and her eyes showed signs of recent weeping.

"What's up?" Phil abruptly asked.

"Robert Carey is arrested!"

Phil plunged his hands deeply down into his pockets.

"I thought so!"

"Why did you think it?"

"You said thar was trouble, arnd I ketched on. When was it did?"

"Two hours ago."

"Humph! was the Spider thar?"

"That ruffian is unknown to me, but I think not. The leading officer was addressed as Ruger."

"Ruger? That settles it; same pestiferous feller that got him afore. Whar's Mrs. Alden and Minola?"

"They were taken along, too."

"That was all-fired mean. Mrs. Haight, mum, I ask you whar'fore Minola should be 'rested? What's she done? What laws has she broke? I tell ye it was a mighty mean thing ter take her away! I suppose they was took to the Tombs, warn't they?"

"I don't know. But, Phil, what can you do?"

"Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn. I'm afeerd I can't do anything now. I kin play dodge arnd run; arnd operate trick ag'in' trick; but when onc't a person is 'rested, only perlitical infloance kin save 'em. I ain't got none, arnd now they're jailed, I'm utterly no good. I guess I'll paint my face black, arnd go into mournin'!"

The conversation continued for some time, and Phil took occasion to soundly abuse Ruger, the detective, but, as he freely confessed, he felt utterly helpless.

While they were talking they heard the front door-bell ring, but neither paid any attention until the sound of footsteps in the hall was followed by the unceremonious opening of the door. Then three men walked in, and Phil's eyes grew larger as he saw that one of the trio was Jack Jeffrey, the Spider.

The latter's eyes were equally observing, and an ominous, malevolent grin broke over his ugly features as he saw the boy.

One of the other men addressed the landlady.

"I want to see your lodger, Robert Carey."

"He is not here, sir."

"It's a lie!" cried the Spider. "He is hyar, hidin' like a desperado from the law."

"Woman, be very careful!" cautioned the other speaker. "We are detectives, and have a warrant for the arrest of Robert Carey, alias 'Abe Adkins.' It is a serious matter to block the course of law. Here is my badge—proof that I am an officer. I can show you the warrant, if you desire. Now, save your self trouble, and produce Carey at once."

"I told the truth, sir, when I said he was not here," answered Mrs. Haight. "He was arrested over two hours ago."

"Arrested? By whom?"

"The officer gave the name of Ruger."

"Don't know him."

"Nor anybody else, I reckon!" put in Jeffrey. "Officer, don't ye be bamboozled. These folks are lyin': they've got Abe Adkins hid here, an' they're tryin' ter fool ye."

"You are at liberty to search the house thoroughly, sir," Mrs. Haight said, with dignity, addressing the officer.

The house was searched, and the fact clearly established that neither Carey nor his relatives were there. The detective seemed a good deal puzzled, while Jeffrey was furious, and could no longer restrain his desire to speak.

"One thing is sartain," he exclaimed, "this kid is hyar, and he kin be arrested!"

He pointed to Phil as he spoke.

"Why should we arrest him?" the officer asked. "What had he to do with the forgery?"

"Nothin', but he's helped Carey ter dodge the law."

"Ef I'm guilty o' sech hein'us crimes ez you say, you had better git a rope arnd harnge me right off," observed Phil. "Jack, you orter been a lawyer. Sech a joodicial mind ez your hadn't orter been lost ter the forum o' jestice arnd law. Assooreddy not!"

"Officer, will ye take him?" Jack asked.

"I have no warrant."

"Tain't necessary. He stole a lady's goold watch on Houston street, t'other day."

"Mr. Spider, go slow," advised the Pavement Prince. "You are lyin', arnd you know it. Whar's the watch? Whar's the woman? Perdooce yer witnesses. Trot out yer evidunce! Why, ef ye had a bull's-eye lantern arnd a brass button, you'd be a cop, jedge arnd a hangman, all in one. Go slow, J. J., or you won't pint ter yer reco d with any pride."

"That's sound advice," the detective agreed, "and you had better let the boy alone, Jeffrey. If I find you work only on personal spite, I shall believe you are lying in regard to Carey. Go slow!"

The deep red tinge which told of almost choking anger came into the Spider's face again, but he was wise enough to put some restraint on his tongue.

"I am going directly to Police Headquarters!" suddenly announced the detective. "I don't understand who this 'Ruger' is, nor how

it happens that Carey is already arrested. I am going to see Inspector Byrnes, and settle the matter."

"Let me go with ye," said Phil, eagerly.

"You? Why do you want to come?"

"I warnt ter find out jest what you do, arnd Rob Carey is my ward—my adopted son. His welfare must be looked arter, d'yee see? Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

The officer smiled, and then agreed to the proposition, much to Jeffrey's wrath; and the latter was rendered almost furious when told that he could go home. He remonstrated, but in vain. The officer had lost all faith in him, and took but little trouble to conceal his disgust; so the Spider had the disagreeable experience of seeing the boy whom he so bitterly hated usurp his place.

Phil and his new acquaintance went at once to Police Headquarters.

This is a large, grim-looking building on Mulberry street, just north of Houston. All things are well arranged there, and Phil found much to interest him. Entering at the main door he saw a long hall, in which were several policemen in uniform. His companion nodded to them, entered a door at the left and went on. They passed through a room in which were seated more men of the force; then northward through a passage; then eastward through another passage, and entered a large room.

However much a person may desire to see Inspector Byrnes, he cannot pass beyond this point without leave, and many a public man who had thought his name all-sufficient, has been halted here and turned back because his business was not thought important by the chief of detectives. Inspector Byrnes is harder of access than the President of the United States; he is always crowded with business, and can see only those who have something important to say.

Phil's companion, who had been up to this time bold and independent, removed his hat and very meekly approached the very resolute-faced man behind the railing. He was well known, yet, not until his name had been carried in, was it known whether he could see the chief.

The answer was favorable, and he disappeared through a door at the southeast corner of the room, leaving Phil to await his return.

But Phil's waiting was soon over; his friend, the detective, reappeared; and the boy hastened to his side.

"Come on," said the detective. "We will go now, and I can tell you that I have strange news!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE WEDDING.

PHIL did not ask any questions then. They retraced their steps through the several passages, and finally stood in Mulberry street again.

"What did ye find out?" asked Phil.

"First, Robert Carey and his family are not at Police Headquarters, the Tombs, nor, as far as reported, any subordinate station-house. Secondly, no such name as 'Ruger' is known to Inspector Byrnes."

"No?" said Phil, in surprise. "Greatginger! what d'yee make o' that?"

"It's a mystery."

"What's been done with the pris'ners, anyhow?"

"That's it. They are arrested by a man who claims to be a detective, or police officer of some sort. He may be one, but, if he is, he has given a false name. But what has he done with his prisoners? They have completely vanished. Now, there is something wrong about this, and I believe that private foes have spirited Carey away."

"But whar's he been put?"

It was a question over which they pondered for some time, but all their exchange of ideas did not serve to explain the mystery. The strange detective and his prisoners had vanished and left no sign behind them, and no theory would satisfactorily explain the matter.

Phil went home, while his companion investigated further. He spent four hours in looking for signs, but, at nine o'clock that night, was still without a clew.

Before Five Points Phil retired that night he had learned that the marriage of Luke Grimes and Clara Vere Stafford was to take place at ten o'clock, the next forenoon, and that all preparations had been made for it.

"Let 'em marry!" thought the Pavement Prince. "They are prob'ly wal mated, arnd birds o' a feather orter flock together; but I'll stir my stumps, ter-morrer, ter make things lively. I'll tell what I know, arnd the gang will find that fax is fax, arnd ugly things ter tackle!"

And he fell asleep.

This night he did not sleep as soundly as usual. Some time after midnight he awoke, and with the feeling that he had been aroused by an unnatural cause. He was not alarmed, and at first gave it little attention, but, all at once, he heard a sound at the window which arrested his attention fully.

It was like, and yet unlike, the gnawing of a rat.

He listened with interest, and then became wide awake. It had flashed upon him that there was a burglar at the window.

The boy cautiously slipped out of bed and approached the suspicious point. He could then plainly see a man outside.

A moment later, the lower sash was raised and a head was thrust inside. The intruder paused and listened, while at the same moment, Phil used his eyes. Despite the darkness, he recognized the man.

It was Jack Jeffrey!

The Spider began to crawl in, while Phil grasped a chair and raised it as a weapon.

The ruffian's head offered a good mark, and with all his force he brought the chair down. Jeffrey was then almost wholly in the room, and he fell to the floor and remained lying there.

Phil hurriedly lighted the gas.

Jeffrey was still where he had fallen, and insensible, while beside him lay a small rope which had fallen from his nerveless grasp. This gave Phil an idea, and with all possible dispatch he bound his enemy hand and foot, making sure he could not escape after recovering.

Signs of returning consciousness were soon visible, and the Spider opened his eyes.

"How de do, Jacky!" coolly saluted Phil.

The prisoner glared at the speaker, and then made a desperate effort to get his hands free.

"Take it easy, J. J.," the Pavement Prince added. "You are tied wuss than Gulliver was by the What-d'ye-call-'ems? You can't get clear."

"Lemme gó, or I'll wipe you off'm the face o' the earth!" the Spider snarled.

"No, ye wou't! 'Cause why? I've tied ye up so you are ez helpless ez a rat under water. Jack, you're a good 'un, but you got left this time. I p'int with pride ter my record!"

"Oh, you young hound!" hissed the prisoner.

"Don't froth at the mouth; 'twon't do ye a bit o' good, arnd it ain't fashionable. Curb yer wrath. You ain't got ter stay hyar permanent; I'll take ye to p'lice quarters in the mornin'."

Jeffrey was full of almost overpowering rage. He threatened the worst things imaginable, and then, finding that he could not frighten Five Points Phil, all his courage gave way and he abjectly begged for mercy—a course as useless as the other.

He was forced to remain there all night, and it was the bitterest experience of his life. Defeat was bad enough in any case, but to be defeated by Phil—that was bitterness beyond comparison. The utter failure of his last desperate effort left him crushed and hopeless.

Day dawned, and the first thing Phil did was to seek Solomon Richmore. If the latter had taken the powder, it had not done him perceptible harm as yet. He heard the story of the prisoner above quietly, and then directed that Jeffrey be at once delivered to officers, and lodged in the police-station.

Phil called an officer, and Jeffrey was delivered to him and taken away. He went in sullen silence.

In due time Alfred Stafford and his sister, Clara Vere, and Luke Grimes, arrived; while about the same time two gentlemen, whom Richmore again spoke in his cool, sarcastic voice—it always seemed sarcastic, whatever he said:

ough knave, but his villainy seemed all right to her narrow mind, as long as he gained a good living by robbing his fellow-men.

"And you, Luke?" pursued the old man.

"I love dear Clara better than my own life," the gambler replied.

"Grand!—noble!" Richmore exclaimed. "Two true hearts are about to be united—yes, yes; about to be united. Mr. Meeks, let the knot be tied at once!"

And then the scheming pair stood up and were made man and wife with due ceremony and solemnity, while Mr. Richmore watched and frequently wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. Clara ran to him as soon as Grimes had released her from the embrace he bestowed immediately after the marriage, and threw her arms around the old man's neck.

"Dear, dear uncle!" she said, "don't weep. Don't feel that you have lost me. I have gained a noble husband, but I will still be your little girl; I will love you as much as ever!"

"Hush!"

The old, dry chuckle broke from Richmore's lips, and it was clear enough, despite his tears.

"I don't doubt it, my tender lamb," he replied. "I know just how deep your love is; I have known ever since the evening, two months ago, when you, Grimes and Alfred, held a meeting at your rooms in regard to me, and you observed that you were going 'to have the old fool's money!'"

Clara Vere Stafford Grimes recoiled, while Richmore pointed to Alfred and Luke:

"I know how deeply you are attached to me. You love me so well that you tried to poison me yesterday."

Every word cut like the sting of a scorpion, and each of the three schemers was white with consternation, but Solomon Richmore did not seem excited.

"Uncle Solomon!" gasped Alfred, "what do you mean?"

"Glad to tell you. In a few words, then, let me say that I have at all times understood you; I have known that your expressed regard for me was only a Judas-act, and that you were scheming to get my money. It was only two days ago that your first outline of the plot—I refer to the interview when *dear Clara* said she was bound 'to have the old fool's money'—was reported to me, but my common sense told me all at the start. I let you go on, though, just to make your defeat the more galling, and I think I have played the hypocrite as well as you."

"Uncle," cried Alfred, desperately, "I swear—"

"Swear not at all, young man! For weeks you have been shadowed by a detective in my employ. I know how you hated Robert Carey and his daughter, Minola; how you once schemed to steal the latter so that I need not see her; how you placed Five Points Phil here, believing him a willing tool, and then, when once my will was made, hired him to poison me."

One moment the speaker paused, and then the old chuckle broke forth loudly:

"Huh! my will! Yes, yes! Blind fools that you were, you did not know that, a few hours after the first will was made—as soon as the next day began—I had another lawyer here, and he made another will, in which you were not named. You shall see my heir!"

He motioned to one of the witnesses, who opened the door, and in came the following persons in order: Robert Carey and Minola, Mrs. Alden, and Mr. Detective Ruger.

It was a great, glad surprise to Five Points Phil, and a thunderbolt to the conspirators, but Richmore again spoke in his cool, sarcastic voice—it always seemed sarcastic, whatever he said:

"Here is a man who is at once my nearest kin and heir; a wronged man, too. Thank heaven, he is forever innocent. Detective Ruger has discovered the truth, and that old forgery was done by another man; Robert is wholly innocent. From this day he need not fear to face the whole world, and I shall stand between him and those who would do him injury."

"Listen, all! I have been a blind, selfish wretch. I was a born miser, and I turned my back on all of my kin, early in life, because I feared they would try to borrow, or beg, money from me. My first good impulse came when Robert Carey went into business. I wanted to help him, but would not do it openly. I advanced ten thousand dollars, but made it seem the loan of another. Then came the forgery and, like a blind fool, I believed Robert guilty, turned against him, and became more miserly and hard-hearted than ever."

"Years passed; I grew old. Finally, my feelings changed; I repented. Then came the

Staffords with their scheme; you know how I handled that. Moreover, I hired one of the best of New York detectives—he is known, just now, as 'Ruger,' and set him on the trail of Robert's alleged crime. I have told you the result; Robert is innocent.

"Twice, Ruger saved Robert from arrest, by arresting him, himself, ahead of the other parties. The first time he intentionally let him escape; the second time—yesterday—he brought him here. He has at all times watched over, and protected him.

"Now I announce that my latest will leaves all my property to Robert Carey, and that I repudiate all former wills. You, Alfred Stafford, and your friends—would-be murderers—may have my *first* will. It is not worth the paper it is written on.

"Some may say that I was severe to encourage Clara to marry such a man as Grimes, but I had proof that *she* knew of the plot to poison me, and, as long as they were determined to marry anyway, I thought I'd make the event a bit dramatic."

"Five Points Phil, come here!"

The sudden command took Phil's breath away for a moment, but he speedily recovered.

"Assooreddy!" he answered.

"Here," added Richmore, "is a boy I am going to watch over and protect. He is a rough jewel, and the only boy I ever saw who was worthy of confidence."

"You're drawin' it pooty strong," Phil observed, "but ef you ree'lly think it, all right. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things!"

It was over.

The last mystery was cleared up, and, when "Ruger" told his story at Police Headquarters, there was no censure for him, but Phil was deeply surprised by the fact that Carey, and his family, were concealed in Richmore's own house at the time there was such a call for them at the Mulberry street station.

The second charge against Carey—that of assaulting an officer—was hushed up by Richmore, who took Robert, Mrs. Alden and Minola to his home and loaded them with presents. It transpired that the cunning old man had merely feigned his illness, and he arose like one good for another ten years of life.

Truly, a new existence had dawned for the family, and nobody could call Richmore a miser after that.

He would not prosecute Alfred, Clara or Grimes; he said their own natures would be their greatest enemies, and he was right. They plunged into crime deeper than ever, sunk lower than ever, and are, one and all, in prison to-day. Thus ended their plots.

Jack Jeffrey is another prison bird, and judging by the length of his sentence, he will not live to get out and spin another web.

Richmore kept his word in regard to Five Points Phil, and, aided by Robert Carey, is helping the boy practically to grow up a useful man. Phil is sure to do his part, too. He thinks them remarkably kind to him, but they feel that, after his brave efforts in behalf of them all, they cannot do too much for the Pavement Prince.

THE END.

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